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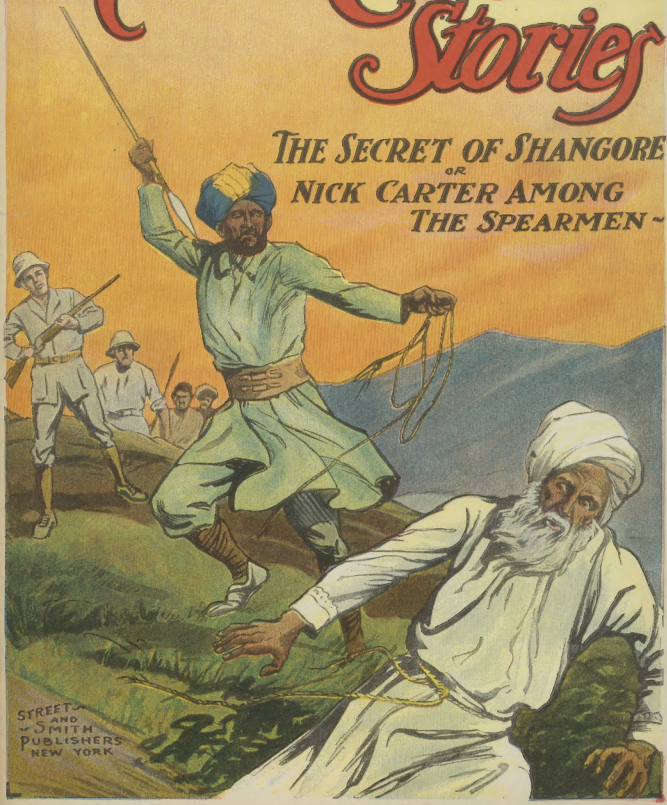
Nick Carter Stories

THE SECRET OF SHANGORE
OR
NICK CARTER AMONG THE SPEARMEN



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NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE SECRET OF SHANGORE;

Or, NICK CARTER AMONG THE SPEARMEN.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

AN ECHO FROM THE FOE.

"No, Carter! I shall not go back until I have got my hands on that wretched crook, William Pike, and I don't care if it leads me into the very heart of this strange country where they say a white man never has come from alive."

The speaker was Jefferson Arnold, the multimillionaire shipowner and importer of Oriental goods, whose establishment was one of the best known of its kind in New York City.

His firm jaw came together with a snap, and his dark eyes sparkled with determination in the red light of the camp fire, as he looked at the world-renowned detective for approval of his determination.

"I am rather glad to hear you say that," was Nick Carter's calm reply.

Jefferson Arnold jumped up from the rock upon which he had been sitting and went around to shake the detective by the hand.

"I knew you would agree with me," he shouted. "We have found my son Leslie among these rascals, and we've driven them back over the Himalayas all right. But that is not enough for me. I want to see what these mysteries are that we have heard so much about."

"Bully for you, Mr. Arnold!" cried Patsy Garvan. "That's the stuff. I want to lick one or two of those black brutes for what they did to us the last time we had a mix-up."

"What do you mean?" put in Chick. "I ask that as first lieutenant of the greatest detective in the world. We licked 'em, didn't we?"

"Sure we licked them!" agreed Patsy promptly. "But they blazed away at us with poisoned arrows and tried to dig holes in us with their spears. It wasn't their fault they did not lay out our whole bunch."

Nick Carter laughed heartily.

"When people get into a fight, Patsy," he reminded his young second assistant, "the object is understood to be to hurt the enemy as much as possible. You should not hold that against anybody who puts up a fair fight."

"That's all right!" conceded Patsy. "But this wasn't any fair fight—at least on the side of these Indians from the Land of the Golden—what is it?"

"The Land of the Golden Scarab," supplied Nick.

"All right! I'd forgotten that word. It's always a sticker to me," grumbled Patsy. "But, anyhow, when those fellows, with their white turbans and black faces, and their thin shirts and short pants, came surging from behind the rocks, trying to get us by surprise, I hadn't any use for them. What I want is a man to stand up before me and give me a fair-and-square give-and-take. Then I haven't any kick coming if I get the worst of it."

"When shall we start?" asked Jefferson Arnold impatiently.

"You mean you will not go down to Calcutta, to get reenforcements, then?" asked Nick.

"No, indeed," returned the millionaire. "What would be the use of that? Here we are, right among the foothills of the Himalayas, and we know—or think we know—that this mysterious race of beings, who worship the Golden Scarab, are just on the other side of the range, in front of us."

"That's what I learned when those fellows were leading me along," put in Leslie Arnold, as he carelessly took from his belt the automatic revolver given to him by Nick Carter a short time before, and lovingly regarded the cartridges. "Ask Adil."

Adil—tall, dark, grave, and of the best type of Hindu—came forward from the shadows and made a salaam to the company in general.

"Adil is my friend," continued Leslie.

"Thy servant, sahib," corrected Adil respectfully.

"His valet, as we should say in New York," came from Jefferson Arnold. "Here in India they say body servant—except when they use an Indian word. It's all the same. Go ahead, Adil!"

"They were taking us to Bolongu, where the Golden Scarab is all powerful," explained Adil. "They said we should get there in another day. It was then that Sahib Leslie and I got away. So we did not go."

"You bet you didn't go," put in Patsy Garvan. "You ran into us, and we had a word or two to say."

"And that is all you know about it?" asked Jefferson Arnold, disregarding Patsy's interruption.

"I have heard much more," replied Adil. "But I do not *know* any more than I have said."

"We can go on with the force we have," remarked Nick Carter slowly. "Because, no matter how large a one we might take with us, they would count for little against the hordes of Bolongu."

"Do you mean that you don't think we can get hold of Pike, if he stands in with them?" asked Jefferson Arnold.

"No. What I mean is that we may have to depend more on strategy than on physical violence," smiled Nick Carter. "We shall have to pit our brains against theirs."

"That ought to be easy," snorted Patsy. "What do these Indian 'smokes' know?"

"The wisdom of the East is proverbial," returned Nick, in grave tones. "There is not the slightest doubt that the men of the Land of the Golden Scarab have more general knowledge than many white men."

"Wow!" howled Patsy, at what he regarded as a horrible reflection on his race. "If I didn't think I knew more than any of these black spear throwers we've met in India, I'd quit business and go to playing checkers the rest of my life."

"Well, that's all about that—isn't it?" interrupted Jefferson Arnold impatiently. "Let's get a move on."

"We will wait another hour," suggested Nick Carter. "By that time the moon will be down. We shall be in an exposed situation as soon as we get out of this cave. If there were moonlight, any of those fellows who might be farther up the mountain could shoot poisoned arrows into us, or even reach us with spears."

"Well, this is something I didn't expect," remarked Chick, as the others moved from the fire, leaving him alone with Nick Carter. "We were lucky enough to rescue young Leslie, and we got his man Adil, too. That is all you were asked to do, wasn't it?"

"Yes," answered Nick. "We came to India to find Leslie Arnold. His father was in such pitiful distress, that I should have been disposed to lend him what help I could, even if he had not engaged me on a business basis."

"Of course you would," assented Chick, and he knew it was the exact truth. "But now that you have found Leslie, and he's all right, do you think it is worth while to go any farther?"

"Why not?" asked Nick dryly.

"Because, as you know, your desk in New York must be piled up with business by this time," returned Chick, with some warmth. "It is a question whether such a man as you, on whom so many persons depend when they are in trouble, has the right to stay away longer than he is absolutely obliged."

"Legal right—or moral?" smiled the famous detective.

"Moral, of course," was Chick's quick response. "And that has always had as much weight with you as the other kind. Therefore, I say that we ought to let Pike go. The Arnolds can find him without you. That is, if he can be found at all."

"Think so?"

"Anyhow, if they can't, it's none of our business. We are a long way from Madison Avenue, remember. It will take us many weeks to get home, even if we were to start to-night. We shall have to travel nearly half around the world."

Nick Carter was amused at his companion's earnestness. He knew that Chick's advice was given with the very best motives. His assistant would follow him into the very jaws of death—had done so on many occasions. But it seemed to Chick, now that they had finished the job they had come for, that it would be better to get home as quickly as possible.

It was quite true, as he had said, that there would most likely be piles of business on his chief's desk in his Madison Avenue home by this time, and that scores of people would be anxiously awaiting his return.

But Nick Carter believed that he owed it to Jefferson Arnold to help him bring the rascally William Pike to justice, whether the money he had stolen from the Arnold Company's Calcutta office—a hundred thousand dollars—were recovered or not.

Pike had been a trusted employee—the manager of the Indian branch of the great New York house—and he had taken advantage of his position to steal what might be called a fortune.

For the moral effect on others, he should be caught and made to answer for his crime.

Perhaps there was another, and potent, reason for the great detective desiring to penetrate the mysteries of the great Himalayan range that he confessed hardly to himself—his innate love of adventure.

Nick Carter always had been interested in the vast unknown stretches of Asia, and what he had heard of Bolongu, the Land of the Golden Scarab, had been of a nature to make him long to go there.

There was every reason to suppose that William Pike had found his way into this strange country, because Leslie Arnold knew that he himself was on his way there when he managed to escape. Pike had some kind of compact with the natives of Bolongu, and it was to their land he had doubtless gone when his scheme against young Arnold failed.

"Sahib! We must fight!" suddenly boomed a deep voice out of the darkness of the cave in which smoldered the remains of the camp fire. "They come."

The owner of the voice stalked into the red glow of the fire and made a deep salaam to the detective.

"Hello, Jai Singh! Where did you get that news?" asked Nick Carter.

"Jai Singh watches, sahib!" was the grave reply. "The men of the Golden Scarab are far off. But not far enough to hide. They have one of their priests in the rocks across this mountain."

"You mean in Bolongu? I should say there is more than one there," rejoined the detective. "If the stories I have heard are true, hundreds of them are in the Land of the Golden Scarab."

"This priest is much nearer," returned Jai Singh. "He

prepares the things required for feasts of the god in Bolongu."

Nick Carter got to his feet and looked at the tall, dignified Hindu in some impatience.

"What the deuce do you mean?" he demanded. "And why should we care for one priest? Where are the men we drove back yesterday?"

Before Jai Singh could speak, there came an answer to Nick Carter's query which could not be mistaken.

It was a concerted howl of hatred and vengeance, which reverberated among the rocks and seemed to be close at hand.

Nick jumped to his feet, his rifle in hand, ready for instant use, as he looked around for the other men of his party.

Jai Singh smiled soberly and shook his head.

"They are not in our camp, nor very near the place we hide," he said. "The sahib can put down his gun for the present."

"I heard them not more than a hundred yards away," insisted Nick Carter.

Again Jai Singh shook his head, while the smile his dark face had worn before crept slowly to the corners of his mouth and into his deep eyes.

"You think you heard them close. That is because the mountain walls carry sounds from a long distance. It was the echo that came to us. The men who shouted are two miles away."

For a moment Nick looked at the tall East Indian as if inclined to contradict him. Then he recollected that he had heard a great deal about these wonderful mountain echoes, and he said nothing.

"It is on the same principle as the whispering galleries of great buildings," he thought. "I have heard whispers from a distance seemingly right in my ear in the Capitol at Washington. Why should I doubt the phenomenon in this wonderful land of strange things?"

"What's the orders, chief?" suddenly broke in Patsy Garvan, whose unquenchable curiosity brought him over when he saw Jai Singh and Nick Carter in conference. "Do we go ahead and clean out those blacks in the mountains, or are we to take a quiet jaunt into the Land of the Golden Pelican, or whatever it is?"

"We shall get to the Land of the Golden Scarab in due time, I hope," was Nick Carter's quiet reply. "We shall start in five minutes. Tell everybody to get ready. And ——"

But Patsy had already rushed off to announce joyfully that they were going into action, and he did not hear anything more from his chief.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THEY FOUND IN THE CAVE.

"The fact that we know the rascals are two miles away makes it unnecessary for us to care about the moonlight," remarked Nick Carter, as, ten minutes afterward, he strode along a narrow ledge that wound its way up the mountainside.

"I am glad of it," grunted Jefferson Arnold. "I didn't want to wait for anything."

Nick did not reply. He turned to see that all his little army was coming along, and that all were properly equipped for anything that might happen in the way of fighting.

There were his two assistants, the two Arnolds, Adil, and Jai Singh, with the four coolies, whom he could perhaps be able to depend on in a scrimmage, but who, at all events, were useful to carry most of the baggage.

In addition to all these, there was one member of the party who said nothing, but who was not to be despised in a pinch—the magnificent bloodhound, Captain.

Trained to do police work from his puppyhood, and with a scent that never failed so long as there was anything for him to follow, Captain might still prove himself to be the most valuable individual in the party when it was desirable to follow some slippery and cunning foe.

They were walking along a narrow path of rock, with a towering wall on one side and a seemingly bottomless cañon on the other. It was such a trail as is often found in the mountainous districts of the Far West of America.

"Be cautious," Nick Carter admonished his followers. "This is the kind of place where there might easily be a guard at intervals, if the Bolongu men know as much about the strategy of warfare as I believe."

"You need not fear, sahib," came from Jai Singh. "They are frightened. They will not attack us till we have got out of this part of the mountains. They shout, but that is all."

"I wish they would show up a little nearer," observed Patsy. "I'm getting as rusty as an old gate for want of a scrap."

"Keep quiet, Patsy!" growled Chick, by his side. "You'll get all the fighting you want before this trip is over—perhaps a little more. What's this cave just in front of us, I wonder? I see several of them."

"They have been used by outposts," volunteered Jai Singh. "See! Here is a rusted spear head. It has been here for years, from the look of it. But it shows that sentries have used these caves at some time."

"There always have been fights in this part of the country, I should say," remarked Nick Carter. "Is that a flight of steps I see yonder?"

"Yes, sahib."

"How far is it away?"

"Three miles."

"It does not look so far," declared Nick. "Don't you think you are stretching it, Jai Singh?"

"It may be a little nearer as the eagle flies," replied the Hindu. "But the trail is even more than three miles."

"Gee! This is more like a Marathon than a healthy scrap," grumbled Patsy. "He talks about three miles as easily as if it were only three feet. This kind of stunt might fit a letter carrier from the Bronx. But I wish we had horses or a motor car."

Patsy Garvan liked to complain in this way. It was exercise for his tongue and gave his lively mind something to do. His discontent was only skin-deep, however. He did not mean anything, and Nick Carter, who overheard, smiled in amusement.

The path became narrower, so that only one person could walk at a time, and even then with the greatest of care. Then again it widened out, with room for three men abreast without being crowded.

"There are the steps!" exclaimed Nick Carter, as they turned a sharp corner. "We are getting into warm quarters."

"Some of the Bolongu men may be at the top," suggested Jai Singh.

"Do you think so?" asked Jefferson Arnold.

"I do not," returned the Hindu.

"You don't?" spluttered Jefferson. "Then why in thunder do you say——"

"It is wise to be steady," was Jai Singh's grave rebuke.

The flight of steps was a long one. When they got to the top, Patsy Garvan said he had counted three hundred and nine steps.

"That is correct," confirmed Jai Singh. "I have counted them before, as well as now. I have often thought that, with a picked twoscore of men I could hold it against a hundred. What do you say, sahib?"

He turned to Nick Carter—as he generally did when he sought confirmation of some statement he had made.

"I think you are right," returned the detective. "But I am glad the Bolongus are not here, keeping us off. These steps have saved us going a long way around, from the appearance of it."

"They have," assented Jai Singh. "You want to get to their land quickly, and I help you to do it. We could have gone a longer and safer way. But this is straight."

"What do you mean by 'a safer way,' Jai Singh—Bolongus?"

"There would have been no fear of meeting Bolongus. But we may have to fight our way after coming up these steps."

Nick Carter did not reply. It would have been waste of time to tell the Hindu that there was no desire to avoid the Bolongus. Jai Singh knew that as well as anybody.

The trail seemed now more perilous than ever. So narrow was it in places that they had to edge along sideways, with their toes actually overhanging the dizzy abyss. And it was some three thousand feet to the bottom, at that.

Once the butt of Jefferson Arnold's rifle touched a projection behind him. He tilted forward, and it was only the quick throwing out of Nick Carter's arm that saved him from lurching headlong into space.

It was Chick who saved the next man from deadly danger. One of the four coolies stepped on a loose pebble, which rolled under his feet and caused him to half turn toward the brink of the precipice.

The coolie was carrying rather a heavy load. Chick saw him sway under it, and an agonized expression came into his face.

"Look out there, son!" called out Patsy.

But Patsy was too far away to help, willing as he was to do it. It was up to Chick. He gripped the man by the legs below the knees and flung him flat, to take the jerking strain which he knew must come.

It did come, too. The coolie flung up his arms and fell over the edge of the precipice. But Chick held on grimly till the man had wriggled back to safety. That was what he had laid himself out to do.

It was all over in two or three seconds. But it seemed more than a minute before they heard the reverberating crash as the load he had carried reached the bottom of the cañon.

The sound sent a chilly feeling to Chick's heart that nothing in the way of any ordinary danger could have done.

"I reckon we'll use ropes," decided Nick Carter, who saw that his assistant had actually turned a little pale. "We won't take any more chances."

Two long lines of rope were knotted together and a loop turn taken around the waist of each man in the party.

Nick Carter took the lead, while Jai Singh was in the middle, they being the heaviest members of the party, and Chick at the rear end. Captain trotted along behind. He was sure-footed enough not to require ropes to keep him out of trouble.

"What's that big cave ahead of us, Jai Singh?" asked Nick Carter, when they had proceeded in this manner for two miles or more.

"It is the first sign that we are getting near Bolongu," was the reply. "We should stop before we go into it. What there is inside it is not for me to say. We must see."

"That sounds rather pleasantly mysterious," remarked Jefferson Arnold.

The Hindu did not reply, but kept his eyes fixed on Nick, to see what the detective meant to do.

"I understand," said Nick, quietly. "We will make camp just inside the cave, to be out of the wind. How far does the cave go back?"

"Farther than any white man has ever been. Neither has Jai Singh gone in. It belongs to the men of the Golden Scarab."

"Do you mean that we shall find a lot of the rascals inside?" asked Jefferson. "If that is the case, it will not be wise to light a fire."

"There is nothing to fear," returned Jai Singh. "Only priests ever go into this cave, and they are a long, long way back. We will see."

Nick Carter had perfect faith in the tall Hindu. He proved it by having a fire lighted in the entrance of the cave, and telling Adil, who had been appointed chief cook, to get supper.

They all dispatched their supper with appetites that might be expected in men who had been following a rough and difficult trail all day. But every one had his rifle ready for use, and Jai Singh's spear was always at his hand, while the revolver he carried in a regular cartridge belt at his waist could have been brought into use at any instant.

Nothing was seen to disturb them, however, and when, at last, Nick Carter got to his feet and announced that he was going to explore the cave, his two assistants, Jefferson Arnold, and Jai Singh were ready to go with him.

Leslie Arnold and Adil would have liked to go, too. But the detective told them to stay and guard the entrance to the cave, in company with the four coolies and the bloodhound.

Nick Carter gave his orders quietly, but at the same time in a manner that told of his determination to be obeyed. No one thought of disputing him.

"I will take one of our lanterns, and you, Chick, carry the other," he directed. "We can give light enough with them for all of us."

The entrance of the cave was some thirty feet wide, and of about the same height.

They had not gone in more than two or three hundred yards, however, before they found themselves in a very circumscribed space. At the same time, they noticed that the cave seemed no longer to have been the work

or nature, but of a human skill that struck them, under the circumstances, as decidedly uncanny.

The sides and roof of the rock had been smoothed until they glistened in the light of the lanterns, while the floor was paved with regularly laid blocks of different-colored stone that had the appearance of veined marble.

This was not all. On the smooth walls were engraved pictures of battles between warriors in the garb of Indians of long ago, intermingled with representations of strange animals which might have belonged to another world.

"Gee! This kind of thing gives me the willies!" exclaimed Patsy. "Look ahead there! What's that?"

He was pointing to a sort of stone table. On it lay the body of a man without a head!

CHAPTER III.

THE WITCH DOCTOR.

It was a grisly object to be encountered so unexpectedly, and, as the light of the lanterns flickered upon it, Patsy's overwrought imagination made him think it was preparing to get up.

"Gee! I wish I was out of this!" ejaculated Patsy involuntarily.

"Why?" whispered Chick. "That can't hurt you."

"How do I know that? Look on his chest. There's some kind of tattooing. Looks like a lobster."

"It's a beetle," corrected Jefferson Arnold.

"The Golden Scarab!" explained Jai Singh, in his deep, resonant voice. "You see that they are on the walls, too."

"You're right," agreed Nick Carter. "There are etchings of beetles all over the walls and ceilings. But they are mixed up with men and trees and rocks. I did not detect the beetles at once."

Indeed, the drawings had been so skillfully made that it was only after looking at them a second time that one saw how many representations of the strange god of these people there were.

Nick Carter stepped in front of the others, to inspect closely the still form on the stone table.

He noted that the table—a mere slab—was long and narrow. There was room on it for the body of a tall man, and not much more.

The dead man had nothing on but a loin cloth, and the skin was much lighter than that of the ordinary East Indian. Indeed, it was more like that of a Chinese, although taller than most Chinamen. Even without the head, it could be determined that the man in life had been of considerable height.

"Dead a long time, from its general appearance," muttered Nick Carter. "But the embalming has been done with Oriental skillfulness."

Indeed, the preserving was so wonderful that the figure looked more like an image in some kind of polished dark marble than something of human clay.

Some glistening, lacquerlike substance had been employed, which, although colorless and transparent, kept out all the air. It had hardened after being applied as a liquid, and was now like glass to the touch.

No living person was in sight, and the invaders determined to go on farther.

They had come upon a mystery, and not one of them was willing to go back until they should discover the solution.

Patsy had recovered from his first shock of horror, and now was bending over the table, studying intently the sketch of the Golden Scarab on the breast of the corpse.

"Rather a nasty thing!" he remarked. "I don't mind seeing a man who has been knocked out in a fair scrap, even if it has killed him. But this business of a fellow losing his head and being iced over—— Well, he isn't any wedding cake, I'll tell you those."

"That will do, Patsy," interposed Nick Carter. "You need not lose your own head over it. The cave extends a long way yet, from the look of it. We are going. Do you want to come along?"

"Ugh!"

Patsy grunted at the very thought of being left alone with this gruesome thing, and was close by the side of his chief on the instant.

Farther and farther into the strange tunnel they pushed their way, and at every step were confirmed in their first conviction that it was a place used for unholy rites by a strange people.

There were other stone slabs like the one on which lay the headless body, but all of them were empty. They counted nine in all.

The cave ended abruptly a few paces beyond the last of the nine slabs. At least, that was Nick Carter's first impression. Then he saw that there was a narrow passage which went on into the darkness, but how far he could not conjecture.

"Are we going to squeeze in there?" whispered Patsy.

"Yes."

Nick Carter had already entered when he answered, and was working his way through, his elbows at his sides, so as to take up as little room as possible.

"Don't make any noise," he whispered to his followers. "We don't know what we are going to run into. We may find a hundred men back in this place for anything we can tell."

"I only hope that blackguard, Pike, will be among them," growled Jefferson Arnold. "I wouldn't care how many others there might be if I could get my fingers on him."

"We must wait and see," replied Nick.

He had gone about a hundred feet, the others close behind, when the floor sloped down steeply, and they had to walk on their heels to keep upright.

"I see a light a little distance ahead," he whispered. "It is red, as if it came from a fire. Put out the lanterns, and don't talk until we know what this is all about."

Nick had stopped abruptly, and he was listening, in the hope that something might come to his ears which would explain the mystery.

When the lanterns were darkened, all they could make out was the red glare some way in front, while a faint aromatic odor, as if spices were burning, drifted to them in fitful gusts.

All at once the tunnel widened, and they were able to stand side by side and move about more freely.

They found themselves at the top of a flight of shallow steps—not more than three or four—looking down into an almost circular cavern, in the middle of which was a large brazier, full of live coals.

That accounted at once for the red glare, and soon they saw how the fragrance of burning spices had come to them.

Seated in front of the brazier was a man, clad in a loose white robe which he had permitted to slip down to his waist. His back was toward the intruders, and he seemed quite unconscious of their presence.

So intent was he on his work, whatever it might be, that when Patsy made quite a noisy shuffle in his effort to get a better view, the strange being did not turn around.

They could see his elbows moving, as if he were kneading something in the big caldron that rested on the brazier, and from time to time he took something from a cloth by his side and threw a handful of powdery stuff into the brazier.

When he did this, a great splash of flame and smoke shot upward, and the whole place was filled with a pungent odor that threatened to make Patsy break into a terrific sneeze.

"If you do, I'll stuff a handkerchief in your mouth," whispered Nick Carter, as he saw the danger. "Pinch your nose if you can't keep it back in any other way."

"Look at the roof, chief!" murmured Chick, in Nick's ear. "What are those things hanging to that crossbar?"

"Merciful heavens!" was the detective's gasping exclamation. "This is awful!"

The whole roof of the cavern was blackened by smoke, and festoons of soot hung down several feet in length, like black cobwebs. In the middle of the smoke, hanging from an iron bar, were several shriveled round things, varying in size from an orange to a large grapefruit.

Nick Carter saw what the things were, but he did not say anything.

"What's this stuff on the floor?" whispered Patsy, the irrepressible. "Feels like sand."

"I guess it is sand," returned Jefferson Arnold, as he leaned forward to look. "It shines like sea sand. But what I'd like to know is what that gentleman is doing."

Nick Carter did not reply, but a look of understanding had come into his eyes. He shuddered as he glanced up again to the round things hanging to the crossbar in the smoke and soot.

"It is a witch doctor," said Jai Singh. "He makes medicine. With my own people we cure men like these with the spear before they go too far and try to make trouble. A medicine man should not be allowed to know too much, or he will do harm."

"So you just kill them and get them out of the way, eh?" observed Jefferson Arnold. "Not a bad idea! It might help the United States if they would do the same thing with some of our politicians at home."

They watched the man bending over his caldron and brazier for at least ten minutes before he leaned back and held at arm's length the thing he had been kneading over the fire.

He scrutinized it with the air of an artist looking over a sketch he had just made. Then he made some slight alterations and held it out again.

Nick observed that there was a low couch, with a roll of skins, at one side of the cavern, and that a pitcher and some coarse cakes lay beside it on the floor.

"He must live alone," remarked Chick. "A cheerful existence, I don't think."

Patsy Garvan could not hold back his curiosity any longer. He pushed his way past the others, stole down the shallow steps, and tiptoed across the white sand until he was close behind the man.

He clapped his hand to his mouth to stifle a cry.

What Patsy had seen in the strange creature's skinny fingers was the head of a man—a man with a light-colored beard, hair, and eyebrows. The head had been reduced to the size of an orange.

The head was not artificial. A single glance was enough to assure him of that. No, it was a real head, but in miniature.

The things Nick Carter had noted hanging to the crossbar were human heads drying in the smoke!

In spite of Patsy's endeavor to keep back his ejaculation of horror, he had made sound enough to break the spell which had overhung the place.

The man at the brazier leaped to his feet in a flash, at the same time whipping out an immense two-edged knife of portentous length and sharpened to a needle point.

The fellow was big and powerful, although he had not seemed so when crouched over the fire. His hair was tinged with gray and his black eyes were sunk in their sockets. But he was full of furious energy.

With a roar of savage anger, he charged at Patsy Garvan.

But Patsy was too much on the alert to be there when his foe got to where he had been. The medicine man missed Patsy altogether. Then he found himself in the sinewy hands of Nick Carter.

The detective had seized him just below the elbows and was holding his hands to his sides. Chick raised his revolver, to knock him senseless if he should break loose from his captor.

"I have him safe," cried Nick Carter. "Don't hurt him. We want him alive."

"You do, eh?" mumbled Patsy Garvan. "Well, I wouldn't want him, alive or dead, either."

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENEMY FOR A GUIDE.

Nick Carter had the witch doctor in such a firm grip that there was no danger of his getting away.

"Keep back!" requested the detective. "I'd rather deal with him alone. We'll have him where we want him in a moment."

Slowly, Nick twisted the man's right arm until his fingers relaxed and the knife he had kept firmly in his grasp throughout dropped from his hand.

"Pick up that knife!" directed the detective.

Chick had the knife in his hand almost before his chief spoke, and stuck it in his belt.

"There's some rope by that couch, Patsy," went on Nick. "Bring it over. We'll tie him up. Then we shall be able to see what we have to do."

A minute or two was sufficient time in which to secure the wretch's arms and legs. Then they put him on the couch, where he lay silent, except for his heavy breathing.

The expression on his swarthy face told plainly enough that there would be murder if only he were able to get the upper hand for a few seconds.

Nick Carter gingerly picked up the shriveled head from the floor and examined it in the glow of the relighted lanterns.

The hideous article was perfect in everything but size. The face was not larger than a doll's. The eyes were closed and the eyelashes and brows had been trimmed

down. Some process had been applied to the mouth to reduce its dimensions, but the hair and beard had been left at their full length.

The effect was that of a pigmy face peering from a mass of red-brown hair, while over the forehead, where the skull should have been, was a fillet of soft gold, like a bracelet such as might be worn by a young girl.

"Gee! It makes me feel sick!" groaned Patsy. "Put it down, chief!"

"It is an evil charm!" rumbled Jai Singh. "Throw it away, and I'll drive my spear into the man who made it. Then we can go on. We are wasting time here."

It was not like Jai Singh to exhibit impatience, and Nick Carter glanced at him curiously. The Hindu's dark face had become gray, and his skin was moist with a deadly, superstitious fear.

Nick Carter had no idea of putting the head down until he had learned all possible about it. He had been weighing it thoughtfully in his hand. A sudden idea caused him to turn it upside down and look at the place where the neck should have been.

"I thought so," he remarked. "Look!"

He pulled out a plug, and a small shower of silver sand poured out. When the sand ceased to come forth, the head was hollow, but perfectly firm, with walls about half an inch thick.

"I've heard of this method of embalming the dead in India," murmured Nick Carter reflectively. "A specimen like this would bring more than a thousand dollars from a museum in any part of the United States, because it is rare. Moreover, it is very well done. It is a magnificent example of this sort of work."

"I don't see anything magnificent about it," grunted Patsy. "What are we going to do now?"

Nick Carter deliberately wrapped the head in his handkerchief and dropped it into his coat pocket.

"Look on this man's chest," he said, pointing to the prisoner on the couch. "He has a beetle, like that on the body we saw back there in that other part of the cave. I wish I knew what it means."

He addressed the man in English, but there was no answer except an intensifying of the savage scowl. Then Nick tried several of the Indian dialects, without success.

Once the man spat at him like an angry cat.

"Well-behaved old scout, isn't he?" remarked Patsy. "He ought to be yowling along a back fence, somewhere."

Whatever else this strange creature might have been, certainly he was no coward. He wanted to fight, and it was only because he was bound hand and foot that he did not attack his captors, notwithstanding that they were five to his one.

Evidently he expected no more mercy at their hands than he would have shown them had their positions been reversed. With the philosophy of the true Oriental, he accepted his fate and made no complaint.

"He's a low-caste blackguard, I guess," remarked Nick to Jai Singh, loudly enough for the prisoner to overhear.

Instantly the witch doctor began to writhe on his couch, while from his lips poured a whole-hearted and comprehensive stream of blasphemy in English that might have come from some unregenerate habitant of "Hell's Kitchen," in New York.

Nick Carter smiled. He had counted on his sarcastic allusion to the man to bring forth some such demonstration which would reveal his origin, as well as the tongue he commonly used.

"That fetched him!" observed Chick quietly. "Anything about their caste gets these fellows going before they know it."

The man was cursing again, and Nick could not but admire the ingenuity with which he seemed to find new oaths ready for use as he wanted them.

"Keep quiet!" he ordered sternly. "Unless you try to play us false, no harm will come to you. I could kill you if I liked. But I have no intention of doing so unless you make me."

"What do you want?" growled the fellow, deep in his throat. "This is my home. Why are you here?"

"To find a place that you know. You will show us the way."

A loud laugh that was hardly a human sound broke croakingly from the witch doctor's lips.

"I will not show you anything."

"I think you will," rejoined Nick Carter coolly. "Chick, give me that knife."

He took in his hand the long knife that had been raised against him menacingly when he had surprised the man at his gruesome work, and held its sharp point just above the head of the beetle tattooed on his chest.

"Now," said Nick, "I have but to give one thrust, and there would be an end. Yet my hand does not move. Why? Because you will do what I say. You will take us over the pass that leads to the city of Shangore, in the heart of the Bolongu country."

"Why would you go there?"

"That is no concern of yours," Nick Carter flashed back at him. "We are going there."

"Suppose I should refuse to show the way?"

"We would find it, anyhow," replied the detective. "That is, unless it is only a collection of little huts. In that case, we might overlook them—for a while."

Again Nick Carter had stirred up the anger of his prisoner, with the satisfactory result of his saying more than could have been got out of him in any other way.

"My people are not dogs, to live in huts," he stormed. "Our palaces are of marble and pure gold. Take the ropes off me, and I will show you. The city of Shangore is more beautiful than such white-faced curs as you can think of."

"He's the soul of politeness, that chap!" observed Jefferson Arnold. "If he were worth the trouble, I'd lick him myself, just to teach him to keep his tongue in order. He swears worse than a Malay, too."

"Are we to kill you and leave you here?" went on Nick, addressing the witch doctor. "Or will you show us the way?"

"I will take you," answered the man promptly.

This sudden acquiescence made Nick Carter suspicious. Moreover, he had noted a fleeting gleam in the man's eyes which bade him beware of treachery.

"We will go with you," he said sternly. "But it will be in our own fashion. We will set out at the breaking of the dawn, and you yourself shall go first. A rope will be around you, holding your arms to your sides even as they are now."

"I am to walk tied? Will my feet be free?" sneered the prisoner.

"Of course. But, at the first sign that you intend to play us false, this knife of yours shall be driven into you between the shoulder blades. You know how sharp the knife is. It will surely find your life."

"I shan't play false," growled the prisoner. "What I say I will do is done."

"I don't know so much about that," muttered Patsy. "I wouldn't trust him half a block with my back to him."

"Bring him along. We will take him to our camp at the opening of the big cave. In the morning we will start."

As the detective gave his orders, he stuck the knife into his own belt and watched Jai Singh and Chick help the man from the couch. After taking the rope from his ankles, they led him over to the shallow steps, and thence along the passage in the direction of the outer air.

The brazier was left burning, and none of the remainder of the witch man's ghastly paraphernalia was interfered with.

Nick Carter did not like the willingness with which the man seemed to accompany them. It gave him a misgiving that there might be a trap ahead somewhere, and that it was the prisoner's intention to lead them into it, even though it should mean his own destruction.

The fatalism of India tends to make its people fearless of death. If it cannot come till a certain time that has been set, then why be afraid?

When they got back to camp, the four coolies still had the fire going, and all of them seemed to be very much alive.

Nick Carter himself saw that the prisoner was properly bound. Then he put blankets upon him, for, at this altitude, the night winds were exceedingly chill.

Two of the coolies were appointed to keep watch for two hours, after which the other two would go on guard, and so on through the night.

When the dawn broke, the witch man seemed to be sleeping peacefully. He sat up when he was told to do so, and he disposed of a good breakfast with perfect docility.

It seemed as if he had slept off his ferocity. But Nick Carter did not trust him.

CHAPTER V.

AN AMBUSH.

They started off along the mountainside at a brisk pace, for the early-morning air was still cold, and exercise was a pleasure—to the white men, at all events.

The witch doctor, or priest, led the way. His hands were tied behind him, and some ten or twelve feet of rope was attached to his waist.

Jai Singh held the end of this rope, like a man taking a pig to market, and in the sash worn by Jai Singh was thrust the sacrificial knife. Nick Carter had passed it to him before they started.

Nick himself had his rifle, with his automatic revolver ready to his hand in a pocket. The others were likewise armed—as they had been from the first—and there seemed little chance of the captured priest getting away, even if he had not been so securely bound.

The way seemed to be so easy that Nick was rather puzzled. He had expected to find all kinds of hindrances, considering how jealous the Bolongu people were over the secrets of their land.

Not far from the entrance to the cave they came to a hidden gully, the top of the divide. It was a path quite invisible from a distance—a mere snail track between towering mountains. Nick Carter realized that they were traveling by a secret path known only to an initiated few, and that few confined to the priesthood of Bolongu.

They all kept a watchful eye on their guide, but he seemed not to be aware of that fact. He was unconcerned, and even cheerful—so far as such a saturnine individual could be said to be so.

Always, however, there was a malevolent cunning in his eyes which made Nick Carter keep him under constant surveillance.

The prisoner never pulled at his bonds, nor resented the fact that Jai Singh was holding him in a leash as if he were an animal. Instead, he stepped along at a lively pace, as if he were rather enjoying the walk, and so little enmity did he show to his captors that now and again he called back to them a word of caution when the path took a sharp turn or dipped abruptly.

At the end of two hours' march they reached a ridge from which they could look down into a great valley, about ten miles square. Carpeted with fresh grass of the most beautiful green, there were several streams running through it, all converging in a large lake on the other side.

By the side of this lake was a city, whose towers and minarets shone like gold in the morning sun.

"Are they Mohammedans over there?" remarked Jefferson Arnold. "Seems to me I see something like mosques scattered about among the other buildings."

"Most likely the people of the place have built temples and churches according to their fancy, taking their patterns in architecture wherever they happened to find them," answered Nick. "India is a land of many religions, remember, and there are enough believers in Mohammed in the country to account for mosques anywhere."

There were outlying villages in the distance. But the city itself looked as solid as any in all India. It was surrounded by a wall which could not have been less than forty feet in height, and thick enough to harmonize with its height.

As the little party gazed downward from their elevated position, they were able to see into the very heart of the city, and Nick Carter uttered an involuntary gasp of admiration. He had not expected anything so fine in this otherwise deserted region.

There was a great stadium, with its tiers of solid-stone seats—the sort of structure that has become rather familiar in university towns of the United States of late years—which looked as if it might accommodate fifty thousand people.

Near to it towered the glittering golden dome of the temple, and there were other great buildings only less striking than the temple itself.

"What place is this?" asked Nick Carter, although he felt sure he knew.

"It is Shangore, the capital of Bolongu," replied the captive priest.

As he gave this information, and saw that all his guards were occupied in staring down at the magnificent panorama spread before them, he made a quick movement with his bound hands which surely would have attracted the attention of any one of the three detectives if any had chanced to be looking in his direction at the moment.

But it was one time when they were not quite so vigilant as usual, and the priest used it to his advantage.

In some way he had managed to loosen his ropes a little, and, with his bound hands he got a grip on a small knife concealed in the folds of his robe.

With one slash, he cut the rope by which Jai Singh had been keeping him a prisoner. Then he gave vent to a shrill whistle that echoed and reechoed among the rocks they had just come through, and dashed away, waving his arms.

He was entirely free of his bonds, and the party soon had evidence that the whistle was a signal.

It brought a response like the whistle of Roderick Dhu to his clans. As if by magic, a great crowd of dark-visaged men, armed with spears, short swords, and shields, arose on every side, menacing Nick Carter and his friends.

"Gee! What kind of circus is this?" exclaimed Patsy. "Who are all the supers with the pigstickers? Is this a joke, or are all these dubs the real thing?"

Jai Singh was not the first person to note the escape of the priest. But he was the first to take action. In two bounds he reached the fugitive, his big spear flashing in the sun. The next moment it had buried itself in the back of the fleeing man.

It was Jai Singh's idea of justice, and there could be nothing said in criticism. He saw that his villainous witch doctor had deliberately led the white men and their companions into a trap, and hence was, in his opinion, at least, deserving of death.

The priest, with a sort of coughing grunt, rolled half over, moved convulsively, and then—lay still! An ugly dark patch spread slowly over his white robe.

Jai Singh took little notice of the man he had dispatched. He saw other work to do. So, with a guttural oath, he leaped over the body of the priest and charged straight at the next man in line.

There was a clash of steel, a lightninglike thrust and parry, and the man went down with a clatter, as his big shield fell to the ground, with himself on top of it.

"Come back!" roared Nick Carter and Jefferson Arnold together. "There are too many for you!"

"Very well, sahib!"

Jai Singh called out this acquiescence and then sailed in some more.

He struck swiftly to right and left, sending two more of the warriors to the earth. Then, satisfied that he had done something to uphold the dignity of his white companions and his own caste, he trotted back to see what the detective and Jefferson Arnold wanted.

He soon saw that the little party of invaders were able to take care of themselves.

Nick Carter's rifle cracked twice, to check those of the enemy who were closing in. Jefferson Arnold and Patsy Garvan also blazed away, and with good effect, for they hit what they aimed at.

The men who had so suddenly come into view at the whistle of the now dead priest, fell back in the face of the determined attack of the strangers, and finished up by darting back to the cover from which they had first broken.

There must have been more than a hundred of them. All were big men, well armed. They were a foe not to be despised, even if the force against them had been as great as their own.

They were skillful hunters, too—masters of scouting and woodcraft. Had they not been, they never could have taken an ambush that would escape the keen vision of Nick Carter and Jai Singh, especially with Chick and Patsy also in the party.

"Hello! Look at the congressman over there on the jackass!" exclaimed Patsy Garvan. "Who turned *him* loose? Shall I plug him?"

"No, Patsy! Wait!" ordered Nick Carter. "I think he is going to talk to us."

"All right. I won't shoot," answered Patsy, in a tone of disappointment. "But I could fetch him dead easy. He'd better not give you any back slack, or I'll hand him a lead pill anyhow," he added grumblingly. "I have no use for some of the people I meet in this country."

The person Patsy had referred to was a man of about sixty years of age, and evidently a person of importance. He was not on a "jackass," as Patsy had called it. He bestrode a handsome white mule, caparisoned with golden trappings that glittered brilliantly and must have cost a large sum of money in themselves.

When the other men rushed to cover, this one person sat calmly in his saddle, contemplating the scene as if it interested him, but without any sign that he considered himself in danger.

His features were rather thin, and had a sinister cast. This impression was given more especially by his eyes, which were very dark and penetrating, and shifted continually in the deep caverns in which they were set. He had a rather prominent nose, a high forehead, and a long gray beard that concealed all the lower part of his face.

His dress consisted mainly of a long robe, richly embroidered in gold, and upon his breast there hung some sort of talisman, suspended from his neck by a golden chain.

Nick Carter had formed his little band in battle array at the first alarm. He had marshaled Chick, Patsy, Jefferson Arnold, and Adil as a small covering ring for Leslie Arnold and the four coolies who were carrying the baggage, while Jai Singh had taken his place on the left flank.

Everybody in the party except the coolies had his rifle leveled, and could have shot this man on the white mule at any moment. But he showed no disturbance. He looked at the white men as if they were some curious species of animals he was seeing for the first time.

He uttered some words in a strange tongue, shrugged his shoulders, and urged his mule toward Nick Carter.

The mule picked his way carefully under the hardly perceptible movement of the rider's hands on the bridle, stepping aside to avoid the body of the dead priest, and at last stopped a few paces from the detective.

As the man sat there, not more than a dozen feet distant, Nick Carter had an opportunity to survey him carefully. He noted that his frame was powerfuly built, and that his face was crafty and cruel. Yet, when he spoke, it was in a marvelously soft and gentle voice.

"He's got something up his sleeve," whispered Patsy into Nick Carter's ear. "Look out for him."

"I am looking out," returned Nick. "Keep quiet, and you and Chick be ready for anything."

CHAPTER VI.

NICK ACCEPTS THE TEST.

"You come in straange fashion, my stranger guests," began the gray-bearded man deliberately, as if he were choosing his words, with plenty of time at his disposal. "What is your business?"

"We have business in Bolongu," replied Nick. "Are you the representative of its government?"

The other ignored this question. He was not inclined to be catechized. He continued, as if he had not been asked anything:

"How you came by this road I cannot tell, seeing that the approach to it has been closed for many years—ever since our fathers' fathers died. You must be brave men, and that tall black one there is quick with his spear. He killed three of my picked guards before they could even touch him."

"Hear that, Jai Singh, old sport?" asked the irreverent Patsy. "The old geezer is firing bouquets at you with a machine gun."

"Keep quiet, Patsy!" ordered Nick Carter.

"Also I see that you have death sticks in your hands. I have heard of them."

"Death sticks is good, Chick!" murmured Patsy. "Gee! This will be a fine story to tell when we get back."

"The death sticks can spurt death from afar," continued the Bolongu; "making a great noise as they do it. When a white man of your race came and told me that, I did not believe. I thought he was a liar."

"Yet you speak the same tongue as we," remarked Nick Carter. "Where did you learn that, without finding out other things the white people know?"

"It has always been our language," replied the other. "How we came by it I know not. But the death sticks I never heard of till the white man told me."

"Where is that white man?" asked Nick.

The crafty face of the Bolongu seemed to become a mask to hide everything that might be in his mind. He kept on talking about what he called the death sticks.

"It would please me much to see them work," he said. "Can you not make one of them spit fire and hit something that is not alive? It might crack that rock over there, eh?"

"Later I may show you what the death stick will do," answered Nick Carter grimly. "You say a white man has told you about the death stick. We have come to find that white man."

Up to this moment Leslie Arnold had kept in the background, so that his face had been hidden by the men in front of him.

This had been at the direction of Nick Carter. He had feared Leslie might be recognized by some of these men belonging to the Land of the Golden Scarab, and that it would cause an attempt to take him prisoner again.

Now, as the conversation turned on the white man who had informed this high priest, or whatever he might be, seated on the white mule, as to the uses of the death stick, Leslie could not restrain his eagerness.

He felt sure that the white man must be William Pike, and he wanted to rush forward and find out at once.

"What white man is it you want?" fenced the old man.

"It is the one you have," was Nick Carter's immediate answer. "Deliver him to me and we will depart in peace, doing you no harm. If you do not, then it will be bad for you."

What might have been the result of this bold declaration of the detective if there had been no diversion cannot be positively told, because Leslie Arnold refused to stand back any longer.

He stepped before Nick Carter and stared steadfastly at the man on the mule.

"You are Calaman, the priest," cried Leslie Arnold, in ringing tones, as he pointed a finger at the man's face. "You ordered your men to take another white man and bring him here. But that white man got away."

"Well, what if I am Calaman?" rejoined the priest, with dignity. "I have the right to command."

"Not white men!" shouted Leslie. "It is there where you are to be punished. Do as you will in your own country, and with your own people. But when the Golden Scarab dares to interfere with the tiger that protects the white man, he shall die."

"Leslie!" interposed his father anxiously. "What fool talk is this? Keep back, will you?"

"All right, dad!" answered Leslie, over his shoulder. "I know these fellows. Let me alone." Then, bending toward Nick Carter, he whispered: "You have to bluff them. That is all they understand."

"Who are you, to talk thus to Calaman?" demanded the priest, with sudden fury. "The Golden Scarab does as it wills."

"It matters not who I am," returned Leslie Arnold. "I am one who knows that the days of the Golden Scarab and all his priests are numbered if that white man you hide is not given up."

"Let me think it over," said the priest, with dignity. "We never do things till we have given them full consideration."

He turned away from them, and his white mule, obeying a slight touch of the bridle, moved a few yards, carrying him out of earshot.

"Look here, Leslie," said Jefferson Arnold earnestly. "Don't you know that you are thrusting yourself into unnecessary danger?"

"How?"

"You were a prisoner to these people."

"Well?"

"Now you have come back and got into a fuss with one of their big men. What do you do that for?"

Leslie smiled and toyed with his revolver.

"Well, you see, dad, the men who captured me, and from whom I escaped, are not here. This fellow, Calaman, who is practically the head of things in Bolongu, never saw me till to-day, although he knew his men had captured me."

"He knew your name?"

"I don't think so. All he heard was that his people had got hold of a white man who had much money, and that he could demand a fortune from the father of this white man if he chose."

"And of course he would choose," interposed Jefferson.

"There was no 'of course' about it. The people of the Golden Scarab have wealth themselves. They might have decided to offer me as a sacrifice to that interesting creature. In fact, I heard such talk among the men who caught me in the woods while I was on that tiger hunt, and that made me all the more determined to get away."

"I am glad to know that Calaman has never seen you before. He is the sort of man that I should not like for an active enemy unless I had weapons and plenty of room to fight."

"That's all right, dad," answered Leslie reassuringly. "You need not fear for me. I shan't be hurt. But I'm not going to leave this part of the country until I have that scoundrel, Pike, in a pair of handcuffs."

It was clear that Calaman did not recognize Leslie Arnold. But Nick Carter was by no means certain that there were not some of the men who had taken Leslie prisoner hidden among the rocks around.

He had not forgotten the Golden Scarab guards who had appeared so suddenly, and then had as abruptly vanished.

Some of them would be likely to recognize the young man. If they did, it was easy to predict what would happen.

Calaman turned his mule around and rode again toward Nick Carter.

"My stranger guest," began the priest, with much dignity. "I cannot give up the white man to you. It would not be satisfactory to my people."

"Gee! As if we care for his people!" muttered Patsy.

"We have come to get that white man," was Nick Carter's stolid reply to Calaman. "You do not deny that you have him."

"I do not deny it," replied Calaman. "One of your race has been in our city of Shangore, that you see across the valley, for five moons past. He cannot get away, and nobody can get to him except through my orders."

"He's pretty nearly the whole works, Chick!" whispered Patsy. "I knew that from the first. Now, if I were to plug him, don't you see that——"

"Hush!" admonished Chick.

"No, but, Chick!" persisted Patsy. "I could raise my gun without being noticed, and I could land a cartridge in his shoulder or somewhere and knock him out, without killing him. Then we could——"

"Patsy!" thundered Nick Carter, who had overheard the last part of his assistant's proposition. "Let me manage this matter."

"Oh, all right! You're the boss!" grumbled Patsy. "All the same——"

"Shut up!" whispered Chick.

"Now, Calaman, what is your final answer?" demanded Nick Carter, stepping forward a little from his companions and looking straight into the eyes of the priest. "I have told you that I must take that white man back with me. It is only a question of how it is to be done."

The priest smiled cynically.

"As you say, it is a question of how it is to be done," he purred, in his softest tones. "While I do not say that I will yield him to you, if you will come with me to the city, you shall see him. It may be that I shall be willing to exchange him for some of those death sticks you have. I do not say it will be so—only that it may be."

"We will go with you," answered Nick Carter.

"Very well. But, first, I would have a test."

"A test?" repeated Nick. "What sort of test?"

The priest stretched out one of his long arms and pointed to a goat that stood on a pinnacle of rock, clearly defined against the soft blue of the sky.

"There is one of our mountain goats," he said. "The other white man told me he could kill a goat at eighty paces with his death stick. Therefore, I told him he lied."

"The nerve of him!" grunted Patsy, deep in his throat.

"I put him to the test," continued Calaman, "and he failed. Let me see if you can kill that one. Then I may believe in some of the things you tell."

Jefferson Arnold swore softly to himself.

"It's an infernally long shot, Carter!" he whispered. "The old rip knows that as well as we. And there's a whole lot hanging on the result. It's a good two hundred yards, and the light is tricky."

"But it can be done," returned Nick Carter quietly.

"I know it can. But it isn't certain—or wouldn't be to me. You're a better shot than I am. You'll have to take the job. That is, if you let him dictate to you at all. My advice is to tell him to go to Halifax and fight it out right here."

"We shouldn't have a chance," declared Nick. "I would rather fight than make terms with him. But we have to consider what we can do—not what we would like."

"I suppose you're right," conceded Jefferson disgustedly. "But I know I'd like to wade in and take a chance. I'd give him a couple of minutes to get to cover, and after that we'd get busy. Durn these people in these out-of-the-way corners of the world, anyhow."

"Amen!" was Patsy Garvan's fervent indorsement of this sentiment.

But Nick Carter shook his head decidedly.

"It wouldn't do, Mr. Arnold," he replied. "If we refuse this challenge, our last hope is gone. I don't trust him any more than you do. But I'm going to get that fellow Pike, no matter how hard it may be. I can nail that animal at two hundred yards if there is no accident."

"There won't be any accident," put in Chick. "Your hand is steady, and I never knew you to miss a shot like that in your life."

Nick Carter put a friendly hand on his assistant's shoulder.

"Of course you believe in me, Chick," he smiled. "And I believe in myself. Still, shooting is not an exact science, after all. But I'll do the best I can, and I hope I shall make a good, clean shot."

"If you should miss, I'll plug that priest before he can say 'Git up!' to his mule," announced Patsy Garvan. "I half wish you would, so that I could have an excuse to shoot. But I know you won't."

"I don't think I will," admitted Nick. "Keep that priest covered, both of you. I don't tell you to shoot him, mind. But make him understand that you have the drop on him."

The detective walked toward Calaman and looked him steadily in his dark, deep-sunken eyes.

"Well?" asked the priest, in a tone that he could not help being slightly sneering.

"I accept your test," replied Nick Carter. "I'll shoot at that goat."

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE DEATH STICK DID.

There was a grin on the face of the priest that even the full gray beard could not conceal. He believed he had set an impossible task for this strange white man. He did not want him to win.

What purpose he had in case of failure was locked in his own bosom. Perhaps he meant to kill the whole party.

Or he may have meant to make them prisoners. The Golden Scarab was always crying for sacrifices, according to the people of that land.

"I accept your test," went on Nick Carter. "But on one condition: Your mountain goat is quite four spears' lengths away even for the strongest of your men. That means that my death stick is four times as powerful as any of your spears."

Calaman nodded.

"If I win, you shall lead us into your city of Shangore and deliver up the white man you hold prisoner. In exchange for him I will give you some of these strange weapons of ours."

"And if you lose?" suggested the priest.

"If I lose, we will fight it out to a finish here and now. But remember this, Calaman: I hold in this little death stick of mine the lives of fourteen men. Each of the other white men with me can take as many more. Then there is Jai Singh, who casts the spear with mightier force than any other man in India——"

"I have some good spearmen," interrupted the priest, with a slight shrug as he stroked his beard with one hand.

"You will need them all if I should fail to bring down that mountain goat," rejoined Nick Carter. "You are a hundred and more against a mere handful of us. But that will not avail you. We shall conquer them all. And I may remark that it isn't likely you, personally, will live long enough to know much about the outcome of the fight."

Calaman waved this last statement aside with a sweeping gesture, as if it were not worth considering. Then, in calm tones, he answered:

"It shall be as you say, stranger. If the goat dies, I, Calaman, head priest of the Temple of the Golden Scarab, will lead you and yours into the city of Shangore, and there for a little time you shall be entertained as guests. This, also, I promise: You certainly shall see that other white man who is of your race—the man you have asked about. For the rest, we can speak of that later."

"You mean in case I should happen to miss?" asked Nick.

"If you lose," returned Calaman, "then we will fight at once. Some of my people you may kill with your death sticks and spears. But a mile down the valley are two hundred more of my guards. That means that, in the end, you will surely be overcome."

"You are welcome to kill us, if you can," said Nick Carter, as he looked over his rifle.

Calaman smiled in his most evil manner.

"We may not kill you," he hissed. "We shall try to take you alive. If we do, I would remind you that we, of the Land of the Golden Scarab, have ways of dealing with our prisoners that are not known to others."

There was no mistaking the awful meaning of these last words. Nick Carter knew that, if he should be taken prisoner, it would be to serve as a sacrifice to the wretched gods these people worshiped. He knew, also, that his death would be indescribably horrible.

But he showed nothing in his calm face of what thoughts passed through his brain. He turned away from the priest, saying curtly:

"Enough words! Draw your mule a little to one side, so that I may have a clear view of what I am to shoot."

Calaman did as Nick requested, and the detective glanced over to where the goat was browsing placidly on the hilltop, quite unsuspicious of the plans against its life. It was a rather larger animal than the goat commonly seen in the United States, and it had long, backward-curving horns that gave it the appearance of being bigger than it really was.

Nick Carter was not deceived by this, however. He knew exactly what he had to do, and he estimated the size of his target as closely as was necessary.

"It will be easy shooting if there are no flickering clouds," he muttered to himself, as he leveled his rifle and steadied his elbow against a rock.

Jefferson Arnold, his son, Chick, and Patsy all held their breath in suspense, and Jai Singh stopped cleaning his spear.

While the air was perfectly still, the light was tricky, as Jefferson Arnold had remarked. It was all against a clean kill.

"You'd better sight for something over two hundred yards, don't you think?" suggested the millionaire, as Nick Carter glanced along his rifle barrel.

"I'll make it for two hundred and fifty, and aim low," returned Nick. "Distances are deceptive in this atmosphere."

Carefully he adjusted his sights and got his range. The foresight of his rifle came upon the animal's shoulder, where he meant to place it.

He did not put the trigger at once. For a couple of seconds he hesitated. Even his iron nerves were strained to an uncomfortable tension.

Crack!

The muzzle of the rifle jerked upward, and they heard a dull knock, as the bullet struck its target.

Nick had made a bull's-eye. The goat turned a complete somersault, and rolled over on its side. It made a convulsive effort to get up, fell back—and lay still!

"Got him!" murmured Patsy, with a sigh of relief.

Nick Carter got up from his knee, threw out the empty shell, and slipped another cartridge into the chamber.

He looked to see what had become of Calaman.

The report of the firearm had scared the white mule, causing him to leap violently to one side.

But the priest was a perfect horseman, and he had control of his animal instantly.

"Well?" ejaculated Jefferson Arnold triumphantly.

Calaman did not allow any expression of surprise to escape him. He was too old a diplomatist for that.

That he was astonished there is no doubt. He had allowed the other white man he spoke of to make the same sort of test, which had failed. Now this quiet, keen-eyed man had knocked over the mountain goat at a longer distance, seemingly without difficulty.

The priest was busy stroking the neck of his mule when Nick Carter turned to him.

"If your men want meat," he said coolly, "let them go and fetch it. I have sealed one side of the bargain."

"That is true, stranger," replied Calaman. "You have kept your word, and I will keep mine."

The group of white men, with Jai Singh and Adil, were

regarding the priest closely. All were ready for any indication of treachery.

Even Captain, who had been sniffing about in the rear, with the four coolies, seemed to realize that a crisis had arrived, for he came forward and rubbed against Patsy Garvan's legs, as if to remind him of his presence.

"That's all right, Captain!" whispered Patsy, stooping to pat the bloodhound's great head. "I know we can depend on you."

"We will go on as soon as you are ready," continued the priest, to Nick. "You shall visit our city, and you shall see the white man who is there. After that we will talk. Had I not seen you kill that mountain goat, I should not have believed—though I, too, can do something of the same kind, in another sort of way."

He signed to three of his men to go and fetch the body of the goat. While they were gone, he sat quietly in his saddle, watching them as they came staggering along with their burden.

They held it up for him to look at, and he examined the bullet wound with much interest.

"It is a very small hole," he muttered, half to himself. "My men say it was done at a distance of six good spear throws. The death stick must have great power. With twenty of those sticks I would be able to command—— Ah, well, we shall see!"

He motioned to his men to lay the dead goat down, and beckoned Nick Carter to come closer.

"Stranger, how many men can you kill with that stick before its power is gone?" he asked. "And what is the greatest distance at which it will do its work?"

"Come here, boy?" called out Nick Carter to one of the coolies. "Bring two of the cartridge cases."

When the boxes were brought over and laid on the ground by him, the detective touched one with his foot.

"In that box," he said, "are the lives of a thousand men and more. As for the distance that they will kill, if you or one of your men will stand up at a thousand paces from where I am, I will lift my death stick and find him as easily as I did that mountain goat."

There was nothing bragging in the detective's tone. He spoke only as any one might tell a truth which was beyond dispute.

Nick Carter felt sure, from the priest's expression, as he narrowed his eyes under their bushy brows, and glanced in the direction of some of his followers, that he was considering the desirability of trying the experiment on one of them.

He thought better of it after a second or two of reflection. A twisted smile came upon his face, evidently forced, and he affected a genial air as he turned again toward the detective.

His good-natured manner did not deceive anybody, least of all Nick Carter. The latter waited calmly for what was to follow.

"It is not necessary to give me any more proofs, my stranger friends," smiled Calaman. "We will start for my city at once. Your men are weary with their long travel. I will let my own guards carry their loads for them."

Nick did not like to see his ammunition cases go into the care of the guards, more particularly as he remarked that the priest gave them quick signs to get them, first of all. But it was impossible to refuse what pretended to be an act of courtesy.

"I am sorry I cannot give you horses to ride," said the priest. "But I have none. By your courtesy, I will ride by your side on this mule of mine. I am not so young as once I was, and if I walk, I soon become fatigued."

The procession started, with everybody apparently friendly to everybody else, and all in good humor.

The coolies were glad to be relieved of their packs, and chattered among themselves with more animation than they had shown since they began their long hike.

Jefferson Arnold drew close to Nick Carter, seeking an opportunity to speak to him without being observed by the keen-eyed Calaman.

"We are walking into the jaws of a trap, old man," he whispered. "That old rascal means mischief."

"I know it," returned Nick, in the same low tone. "But he hasn't got us yet."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRIEST SHOWS HIS POWER.

"What do you suppose his game is?" asked Jefferson, glancing cautiously about him.

"To get our rifles and cartridges," replied Nick briefly.

"What could he do with them, even if he had them? He doesn't know anything about firearms. You can see that."

"It would not take him long to learn. These Bolongus are quick-witted and able in every way. That is apparent by the style of those big buildings over yonder. Then you must not forget how scientifically they embalm their dead. You haven't forgotten what we saw in the old witch doctor's cavern, have you?"

The millionaire shuddered.

"Indeed, I haven't, Carter. I——"

"I have that embalmed head in my pocket now," went on Nick, smiling mischievously. "Want to look at it?"

"Keep it out of sight," growled Jefferson Arnold. "If you bring it out, I swear I'll hurl it at that old priest's head. Then the fat will be in the fire."

"All right!" laughed Nick. "I won't show it. But I saw in Calaman's eyes that he was after our guns and cartridges. He'll learn to use them if ever he gets them. Don't make any mistake about that. Our plan is to keep quiet for the present. Pretend that we don't suspect anything."

"I hate to do that," put in Chick, who had overheard. "Why not make a rush? We could capture all this gang, because we would have them terrorized by what they call our death sticks. Then we should be in a position to dictate to the others in the city, and get hold of Pike without trouble."

The boldness of the proposition made Nick Carter shake his head with a smile.

"It wouldn't do, Chick," he returned. "I don't believe they'd think about our guns if that priest gave orders to them. They are blindly obedient to them, as anybody can see. No, my boy! They'd be all over us before we could strike an effective blow."

"But——" began Patsy, who had forced himself into the whispered conference.

"That will do, Patsy," interrupted Nick. "Don't talk. They're suspicious of us already. This whispering won't do. See how they're hedging us in on every side. That priest knows his business. He has had his men get control of every cartridge we have except the few we carry on us. What could we do without ammunition?"

Though Calaman certainly was suspicious, he did not permit it to show in his manner. Bringing his mule closer, he smiled and talked pleasantly as they moved along.

He paid particular attention to Nick Carter.

"You have learned something of our secrets," he admitted. "I do not know how you came to find the path here. It has not been used for many years. The priest you killed was one of those ordained to prepare the bodies of our principal men, and he was at work in his cave on that of Prince Tillo."

"We saw it," remarked Nick coolly. "But it had no head."

"That is according to our custom," returned Calaman. "When important Bolongus die, they are embalmed by an ancient and secret process. Then they are wrapped in finely beaten gold and placed in the temple. We were on our way to get Prince Tillo's body when we encountered you. The Festival of the Golden Scarab is soon to take place, and we wanted to have the prince's body in its niche in the temple before that day."

"That sounds like the worst kind of rot to me," whispered Patsy to Chick. "It seems to me as if most of the guys in this country are nutty."

"Hush!" reproved Chick. "Listen and look—and say nothing. You ought to know that that's the right thing by this time."

Just then one of the guards who was carrying a box of cartridges stumbled and dropped the box with a crash on the rocky path.

Calaman, with a terrific scowl, stopped his mule. The other soldiers shrunk away from their unfortunate comrade.

"See, now, strangers," broke out the priest, in metallic tones, "I also have the power to kill. I cannot do it from afar, like you. But, on the other hand, I use no weapon. Watch!"

Turning to the guard who had dropped the box, he stared at him steadily.

"Dog and son of a dog!" he thundered. "Look!"

He thrust forward the amulet which hung from his neck by a gold chain. The doomed man fastened his eyes upon the thing. His eyelids did not move.

"Hypnotized!" whispered Jefferson Arnold.

"Yes," assented Nick. "But look."

For a full two minutes the man stood staring at the amulet, rigid as a wax figure. His swarthy face had become the color of dirty lead, and his nostrils were distended as if he had been petrified at the moment of drawing a deep breath.

Suddenly he began to shiver, his teeth chattered, and his eyes rolled inward, until only the whites could be seen.

"Now!" snapped Calaman.

He dropped the amulet from his fingers, and it fell back against his chest with a faint tinkle.

There was a momentary pause. Then the guard blinked, like a man moving in his sleep, and slowly drew his sword from its scabbard.

"Go on!" ordered Calaman.

The soldier was standing alone, in a bare space, everybody else at some distance. A deep breath could be heard from the spectators, and Patsy Garvan gave vent to a half-uttered ejaculation.

With slow, jerky movements, the guard raised his sword. He seemed to be obeying some other power than his own will.

Now came the decisive moment.

He carefully placed the sharp point of the sword against his throat, and seizing the handle in both hands, drove it in until several inches of the blade showed at the back of his neck!

With a choking gurgle, he fell forward on his face. His hands still clutched the hilt, and the point of the weapon glistened horribly among the hair that hung down over his shoulders.

Calaman looked down at him with calm indifference, as he ordered one of his men to take the remains away.

"You see," he added, addressing Nick Carter. "The man is dead, yet I used no weapon. Can you better that, my stranger guests? It was my will that compelled him to kill himself, though he did not want to do it. He paid the penalty of his clumsiness."

Nick Carter was disgusted, and he did not try to hide it. Looking the priest squarely in the eye, he frowned angrily.

"The trick is nothing," he declared. "There are many men in my country who could have done as much, and more. In my opinion, the punishment you inflicted on that man was outrageous and cruel. It would not surprise me if you were called on to pay as heavy a penalty yourself."

The priest shrugged his shoulders with a scornful smile.

"I treat my own as I please, stranger. The dog was mine, and when I willed him to die, he obeyed. Moreover, the Bolongus do not fear death."

It would have pleased Nick Carter to put a bullet into the venerable carcass of the old priest, and see how he would like it. But that could not be done very well, and the march was resumed without further incident.

When, an hour later, they reached the city of Shangore, Nick Carter inspected the great walls with the eyes of an engineer and a military man combined.

They were between forty and fifty feet high, and encircled the whole city. Their thickness was about twenty feet at the base.

"Looks as if this place was built to resist a siege," observed Jefferson Arnold. "Though I don't know who they fear. Look at the loopholes in the towers. I suppose they shoot arrows through them."

"And there are four gates," put in Chick.

"Big gates, too," added Patsy.

"I have heard that this city is as strongly fortified as some of those German places we hear of," remarked Leslie. "When those fellows had me a prisoner, they were blowing about this city of theirs."

"Those four gates are formidable-looking arrangements," observed Nick Carter. "There is a drawbridge to each one. The lake washes the walls all along this side where the gates are. The portcullises are mighty strong, too."

Nick Carter understood the make-up of fortresses as well as most men, and he was struck by the completeness of the defenses of this city so far off in the desert. What he could not understand was why it had been deemed necessary to build such a place out here.

Jai Singh, who had not said much since the journey had begun in company with Calaman and his guards, shook his head as he looked at the great walls, towers, and gates. He did not like them, that was evident.

"Sahib," he whispered to Nick Carter. "Once let those

gates close behind us, and it is the end. We are only seven, outside of the coolies. In that city are many thousands."

"Well, it can't be helped," rejoined Nick.

"Yes, it can," insisted Jai Singh. "Let me drive my spear into the side of that old scarecrow. Then we will fight to a finish here in the open. We should have only about a hundred against us. We could beat them, with our guns against their spears. Even if we did not, it would be a man's fight, and we would take some of them with us if we fell."

"Bully for you!" broke in Patsy enthusiastically. "That's the best thing I've heard to-day. Let's get at them, chief! I feel fine to-day. I'll take on three of them at the very beginning. Then I'll lay them out by threes till the job is done. Gee! Wouldn't it be a great——"

"Patsy!"

Nick Carter had raised a warning voice, and Patsy subsided.

"You see, sahib," continued Jai Singh, still warm with his subject. "Inside those walls we should be as helpless as rats in a box. Let us fight while we can, I say."

"In some ways you may be right, Jai Singh," conceded Nick. "But we are here for a certain object, and I am going to see it through. We'll get that man Pike, no matter how far into the city we have to go. If we fought out here, we never should get inside, whether we won or lost."

"I'd be willing to let Pike go," interrupted Jefferson Arnold, "if it is too dangerous to go in. Don't bother about the money he stole. I can get along without that."

"It is a matter of principle with me," returned Nick shortly.

Five minutes later the little party and their guards were tramping over one of the drawbridges, the sound of many feet echoing on the thick planks, and mingling with a confused noise of loud voices within the city.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WHITE MAN AT THE WINDOW.

It was the humor of Calaman, sitting on his white mule, to play the part of host with all the courtesy of an Arab chief. Incidentally, it may be remarked that he was just about as sincere as the average Bedouin is under such circumstances.

"Welcome to Shangore!" he cried, as they passed under the heavy portcullis.

He led them straight to his own palace, and showed them their quarters, which were in a spacious wing separate from the remainder of the building. The white men and Jai Singh were bestowed here, in well-furnished rooms.

The four coolies were put in another part of the palace, at a considerable distance.

Servants waited on Nick and his friends with the punctilious politeness of the East. Better than anything else they all enjoyed the comfort of a bath, for the first time for many days.

After a bountiful and well-cooked meal had been served to them in a large apartment which had been put at their disposal for a dining room, with soft footed servants anticipating their wants, cigarettes made from native-grown leaf were placed on the table.

Jefferson Arnold, who appreciated good living and tobacco about as thoroughly as anybody, was the first one to praise the tobacco.

"As good as anything I ever got in New York," he declared. "This old priest may be a villain. But his cigarettes are fine, and his dinner all through could hardly be better, even in a Broadway hotel. What do you say, Jai Singh?"

But there was no answer. Jai Singh was industriously polishing his spear, trying its edge on the stone floor at intervals.

"There is nothing wrong with the dinner, and the cigarettes are not bad," observed Nick Carter. "But I wish our four coolies were within reach, and I don't like our cartridges being put in another place, where we can't get at them. It smells bad to me."

"And I hear that to-morrow is the Feast of the Golden Scarab," put in Chick. "I was not supposed to overhear that, I guess. But it happened that I was listening when two of the guards became rather confidential just before we walked over the drawbridge."

"If there is to be a feast, it might be a chance for us to do something for ourselves in the confusion," suggested Patsy.

"What about the city walls?" asked Chick. "Don't forget that they are high and thick, Patsy."

A knock sounded at the door, and a tall servant, with a deep bow, presented himself.

"If my lords are ready," he murmured, as if he felt himself unworthy in such presence to speak aloud, "the great priest, Calaman, would be pleased to show them the sights of the city. He humbly begs that you will bring with you the death sticks which kill at many yards, so that he may see again what they can do."

"Slick old duck!" observed Patsy. "I'd like to show him what they can do while he looks down the muzzle."

Nick Carter waved his hand to Patsy for silence and nodded to the tall servant, who was waiting gravely for an answer.

"We will go," he told the man. "Lead on!"

When they reached the great courtyard of the palace, they found Calaman waiting for them, with a guard of honor consisting of twenty of his finest warriors, each armed with a spear and sword.

The priest glanced at Captain, who followed close at the heels of Chick, and seemed about to object to the presence of the bloodhound. But he changed his mind and said nothing about it.

He was shrewd enough to know that it would be unwise to quarrel with these white people until he had learned a little more about the death sticks, and he was sure that they would try to insist on a dog going with them.

So Calaman led them through the main streets of the city in silence, while Nick Carter and the others took careful note of everything they saw.

Suddenly Chick caught Nick Carter by the arm, and whispered, in agitated tones:

"Look! That window on the right! Do you see that face? It is a white man. Now he has moved away. But he was there."

"I saw him," answered Nick quietly. "Where is Mr. Arnold—Jefferson?"

The guards were all on the left side of the party, having moved to avoid a party of soldiers who were marching toward them on the right. There had been a momentary confusion, and in the midst of it Jefferson Arnold and his son Leslie had darted across the street toward the house at whose window Chick and Nick Carter both had seen the face of the white man.

"Look, chief! They're going into the house."

"I see them," was the reply. "But I don't think Calaman or any of his men noticed that they ran away."

It was fortunate that Calaman was so impressed with his own dignity, which he always maintained with the greatest care when before the people of Shangore, that he had been looking straight ahead as the other soldiers came toward him.

Each man saluted as he passed, and the priest received their homage with grave bows, occasionally glancing out of the corner of his eye to see how Nick Carter took it all.

If it had not been for this bit of ceremony, the priest hardly could have avoided seeing Jefferson Arnold and Leslie dart across the street and into the open door.

Nick Carter would have liked to go into the house at once. But he could not do it while everybody was looking at him.

"That white man must be Pike," he whispered to Chick. "Let Adil slip away and find out. He is not very different in appearance from the other men of this place. He can get in without being noticed, I dare say."

But Chick would not agree to this. He pointed out to Nick that it was a mission requiring more knowledge of white men's ways than Adil was likely to possess, bright as he was.

"I suppose we must wait and see what turns up, Chick," answered Nick Carter. "But if Pike is there, our business in the city is finished. All we have to do is to get hold of that money and depart."

Before he had finished he missed Chick from his side. Looking around in some surprise, he was just in time to see his assistant slipping into the same doorway that previously had swallowed up the two Arnolds.

"Well, we are getting action," muttered Nick Carter. "I only hope Chick was not too hasty."

It happened that they had got to the place where the priest wanted a second demonstration of the power of the death sticks. It was a large open space, like a market place or public square, with houses all around.

One of the houses was that at whose window they had seen the face of the white man, and into which Chick had just run to see what had become of Jefferson and Leslie Arnold, and incidentaly to look after William Pike.

Calaman, who had been at a little distance, giving instructions to some of his men, rode his mule up to Nick Carter and those of his party who remained, and nodded to the famous detective. He did not appear to notice the absence of Chick and the two Arnolds.

"If you will, my stranger guests," he said, "I want to see how you use those death sticks against those who are not goats."

"Gee! The whole caboodle of them around here look like goats to me," was Patsy Garvan's inward comment.

Patsy was much disgusted with the whole of the population of Shangore, particularly with Calaman, and he could not help expressing it to any one who would listen—or to himself, in the absence of any other sympathetic listener.

"I have already shown you that I can kill at a distance," returned Nick Carter, regarding the priest somewhat defiantly. "Does not that satisfy you of the power of the death stick?"

"Not quite. It may kill mountain goats, but be useless against men. There are three malefactors who have been sentenced to death. They shall die at your hands if the sticks you have can do it. See!"

Several of the guards who had been doing something at the other side of the large square moved at this moment, and Nick saw that three men, naked save for their loin cloths, were bound to stakes fixed firmly in the ground.

"Why are they to be killed?" asked the detective, fencing for time.

"Each one has killed a man," replied the priest. "They are robbers, as well as murderers. The laws of Shangore have no mercy on such as they. The festival of the Golden Scarab takes place to-morrw. These men would be cut to death at daybreak. If you kill them for me, your man that you seek shall be given up to you. But first I must see how your sticks are used, and how the little metal cases that make a noise are put into them."

The whole plot was clear. Calaman meant to learn how the rifles were used for his own purposes. He had already taken possession of two thousand rounds of ammunition. If once he thoroughly comprehended the mechanism of the rifles, it would be good night to his stranger guests.

Nick Carter looked from the priest to the three men tied to the stakes, and seemed to be considering.

"Are you ready?" asked Calaman.

"No," was the unexpected reply.

"Why?"

"Because I will not shoot at men who are tied," declared Nick. "In my country we never do such things."

The priest flamed into a fury.

"You will kill those men!" he roared.

"I don't think so," returned Nick imperturbably.

"If you don't, I shall——"

He hesitated, and the detective swung around sharply to see why he did not continue. He saw that the sinister features of the old priest were working convulsively. He was in a seething passion.

"What shall you do?" asked Nick.

"I shall have you and your friends tied to stakes like those, to be cut to pieces at sunrise," howled Calaman, losing all control of himself.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THEY FOUND PIKE.

When Chick darted away from the remainder of his party in the public square, he did not feel any too sure that he could get to the house without being seen.

It was worth a trial, however, for the whole success of their enterprise in coming to Shangore at all hinged on their getting control of Pike before he realized that he had been pursued into the very heart of a country in which he had imagined he must be free from pursuit.

"We've got to find out what his position is here," muttered Chick. "It does not seem as if he can be a prisoner. Unless he is shut up in that room where we saw him."

Chick was inside the house by this time, and he came to the conclusion, as he saw stone steps in front of him leading to an upper floor, that wood was rather a scarce article in this country.

He had observed that the flooring of the rooms in the place were all of stone, and that the fronts of the houses were of the same substance.

This made the houses all strong, and when he had got to the top of the flight of steps—which were built about the same way that wooden stairs are made in America—he was not sure whether this building was a prison or not.

It was a little dark on the landing, and he stumbled over something soft that lay in a dark corner. It was the body of a man.

As Chick's eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw that two other men, in the uniform of the guards, were also stretched out, senseless, on the stone flooring.

It did not take Chick long to understand.

"The Arnolds have come up here and surprised them," he muttered. "Now, where are the Arnolds?"

The answer came in an unexpected way.

A door at the end of the wide corridor in which he found himself burst open, and a man came dashing out at full speed, holding to his breast a sack full of something that he seemed to prize very highly.

On the instant, Chick drew from his pocket a flash lamp and sent a strong white glow into the face of the fleeing man.

"By George! If it isn't just what I suspected!" exclaimed Chick. "It is a white man, and I guess he must be——"

"Pike!" bellowed the voice of Jefferson Arnold. "It's Pike! Stop him! Kill him, if you must! But don't let him go!"

"I don't intend to," was Chick's prompt reply, as he flung himself in the way of the fugitive.

It was a "low tackle" that Chick used to stop the fellow, and it proved effective. Stooping so that he was nearly on the floor, Chick flung both arms around William Pike's legs, and down he went, with Chick on top of him.

"That's right! Hold him! The blackguard!" roared Jefferson Arnold, dashing forward. "Leslie!"

"I'm coming," responded Leslie. "I was looking after the other fellow. Have you got him?"

"Of course I have!" was the millionaire's answer. "Here's Chick, too!"

"Hurry, dad!" cried Leslie. "We're liable to have a dozen of those fellows up here at any minute."

"No fear," replied Jefferson. "We laid out the three outside guards, and the inside one is tied up. Let's take him in again and see what we are going to do."

"It's a good thing I happened to meet this fellow, I guess," observed Chick. "He was making for the stairs."

"Yes, and if ever he'd got out, he would have raised an alarm that might have settled this business at once."

They hustled Pike back to the room from which he had just run, and Chick was surprised to note that it was luxuriously furnished, and that the two windows, looking out on the square, were a little way open, so that any one could easily get out that way if he wished.

"There are no bars to the windows," thought Chick, "and it isn't far to the ground. Not much of a prison."

They hustled the sullen Pike into the room, and Chick closed the door.

The door was not thick, and there was nothing complicated about the lock. It was just such a door and lock as might be on any ordinary room in New York.

Pike was not a prepossessing man now, with his clothing disordered, his hair rumpled, and a smudge of dust across his cheek. But Chick, accustomed to sizing men up at a glance, decided that he would pass for a very respectable type of business man under ordinary conditions.

"I suppose you know I could have raised an alarm and brought the whole city down on you, if I'd liked," growled Pike, as he suffered himself to be shoved into a large easy-chair behind the big table. "You have broken into my private room, after murderously attacking my servants outside, and you have injured this poor fellow who acts as my secretary."

The secretary was tied to a chair hand and foot, and a handkerchief had been fastened over his mouth, gagging him effectually. He looked like a Bolongu, for he had the rather light yellow complexion and the general appearance of all the people Chick had met in this strange country.

"Look into that bag and see what there is," directed Jefferson, without taking any notice of William Pike's words. "You do it, Leslie. You know what we've lost."

Leslie emptied the bag on the table. It had been full of gold coins, with some Indian bank notes for large amount, besides letters, invoices, and other papers stamped with the names of the Arnold Company.

"Can you tell how much there is there?" went on Jefferson.

Leslie Arnold ran through the heap of coins and flipped the Indian bank notes through his fingers with professional skill, and announced that there was the equivalent of more than a hundred thousand dollars in American money.

"That about settles it, I guess," was Jefferson's comment. "I don't think we shall have any difficulty in proving our property. Now, what shall we do with Pike?"

"What is he doing here?" asked Chick. "Is he an official of the Shangore government?"

"That's what I am," broke in Pike savagely. "And it will be a costly thing for you when you're caught. If you had not done what you have, I might have saved you, because Calaman and the other big men of Bolongu hold me in high regard. I am at the head of their war department."

"Oh, you are?" put in Chick. "Then you must be about the most important man in the city, outside of the high priest himself?"

"I am," replied Pike proudly. "You'll find that out when I report this outrage."

"Wouldn't it be well to kill him right here, before he can get into mischief?" asked Chick of Jefferson Arnold coolly, and ignoring the presence of Pike. "We will take our money then and go away without trouble."

"How do you suppose you will get out of the city?" snarled Pike.

"We'll get out," was Chick's calm answer. "Still, if you care to save your life by helping us, perhaps Mr. Arnold would be willing to give you a chance."

Chick winked at Jefferson Arnold over Pike's head, and the millionaire took his cue at once.

"I might consider that," he remarked casually. "Al-

though my only intention was to give Pike up to the authorities here and have him punished. He says he is at the head of the war department of this country. Perhaps he is. But evidently he does not know that we are honored guests of the great Calaman."

The look on Pike's face assured Jefferson that he was on the right tack, and he continued:

"We have come at Calaman's invitation to show him how our guns are used, and it will mean that we can command the whole war department if we choose, because we shall teach the people of Bolongu how to use weapons that have been strange to them heretofore."

"That's nothing," sneerd William Pike. "I showed them my gun weeks ago, and they decided it was no good."

"Perhaps it was you who were no good," retorted Chick. "Calaman admits that he had seen a trial of a rifle before we showed it to him, and that the white man who did it was unable to prove that it was superior to spears and bows and arrows."

"If that were so," rejoined Pike, "it would not prove that you could do any better."

"Look out of the window and see for yourself," advised Chick.

He had been watching the proceedings of Nick Carter in the public square while talking, and now chose a particular moment to let Pike look out.

Nick had refused to kill the three malefactors. But he had induced Calaman to have a slab of stone set up at two hundred yards' distance for a target. In the center of the stone had been placed a splash of mud for a bull's-eye.

Just as William Pike was allowed to look from his window, Nick Carter sent three bullets, quickly, one after the other, in the very center of the mud splash on the white stone.

Calaman descended from his mule and made a ceremonious salaam to the detective.

"Are you satisfied, Pike?" asked Jefferson Arnold, as he pulled the prisoner away from the window.

"What do you want me to do?" was William Pike's surly response.

"To see us safely outside the walls of the city. We shall take the money with us that belongs to us, of course. When we are outside, you will escort us to the pass on the other side of the valley. Once we are among the rocks, we can take care of ourselves. Then you can come back to Shangore and continue to bluff the people here as much as you like. In consideration of your taking us out, I shall not prosecute you."

"And if I refuse?" asked Pike.

Jefferson Arnold whipped a revolver from his pocket and placed the cold metal ring of the muzzle against Pike's forehead.

"That's answer enough," cried Pike, with a sickly smile. "I agree."

CHAPTER XI.

A DASH FOR LIBERTY.

"What are they doing out there?" exclaimed Jefferson Arnold. "They seem to be going home, all of them."

"If you will let me look," suggested Pike, "I may be able to explain. I have been here long enough to know the ways of the place. I come and go as I please, and I can even go outside the city when I like."

"I suppose so," grunted Chick, "or you wouldn't be much use to us. What is it they are doing?" he added, as he led Pike near enough to the window to look out, but ready to crush him to the floor at the first sign of treachery.

"The exhibition is over, and Calaman returns to his palace. The other people are going about their usual vocations. Now would be a good time for us to get out and go to the palace."

"Why to the palace?" asked Chick.

"We must stay there till dark. Then I will get you out of the city. I could not do it in daylight," answered Pike.

This seemed reasonable; and the more so as they saw Nick Carter, Patsy, and Jai Singh strolling casually along, without anybody taking any particular notice of them.

"Look here, Pike," said Jefferson Arnold, as they prepared to go. "I shall hold my pistol against you on one side, and my son will do the same thing on the other."

"And I shall be close behind," added Chick. "But what are we going to do with these three guards of yours. They seem to be coming to their senses."

"Yes, we just knocked them down with the ends of our revolvers," explained Jefferson Arnold coolly. "They are not seriously hurt."

The men got up one by one and looked inquiringly at Pike, as he pointed to the inner room, and followed them in. The two Arnolds and Chick kept close to him.

The fourth man, the secretary, who was bound to the chair, looked at them with a pleading expression, and Chick unloosed him.

"Listen to what your master has to say," directed Chick sternly.

In a few words, Pike bade the four men to tell nothing of what had happened to them, and to stay in the room till he got back. They were to keep the door closed, and not to admit anybody on any pretense.

"In this country absolute obedience is enforced from an inferior to his superior, no matter who they may be," said Pike. "We need not fear that these men will speak. Let us go."

They made their way to the palace and to the rooms set apart for Nick Carter's party.

It took nearly fifteen minutes of explaining and discussion to get it all thoroughly understood by Nick, Patsy, Jai Singh, and Adil that William Pike had contrived to get into an important official position in Shangore by virtue of his knowledge of firearms.

But it was done at last. Then they all settled down to wait for night.

"I have shown Calaman that I can shoot straight three times in succession," observed Nick Carter. "He expects me to make further demonstrations of my ability to-morrow, at the Festival of the Golden Scarab."

"But we'll be out of this by that time," put in Patsy. "Gee, Chick! I'm sorry I wasn't with you when you nailed that Pike over there."

"You can help to take care of him now," laughed Chick. "That ought to console you."

"I'll slap him on the wrist if he gets gay," returned Patsy, with a grin.

For five hours the party of white men, with their two faithful native adherents, Jai Singh and Adil, sat in their

rooms, keeping a close eye on William Pike, and accepting the hospitality offered them by Calaman.

Servants came at frequent intervals to see if they wanted anything, and to bring coffee, sweetmeats, cigarettes, and so on, until Nick Carter told them they all wanted to rest for an hour or two, and would rather not be disturbed.

The grave-faced menials accepted this dictum with the same humble politeness that they had everything else, and did not come near them again.

Pike had been kept discreetly out of their sight. At least, that was Nick Carter's intention. But he could not be sure that the servants did not know of Pike's presence in the palace, since they seemed to find out everything.

"Are you ready?" asked Pike suddenly, when darkness reigned outside, and they had been sitting for some little time by the light of the one lamp which Adil had set going on a side table.

Chick looked out of the window, but could see only blackness.

"Quite ready!" replied Nick Carter.

The money taken from the bag in the possession of Pike had been distributed among the two Arnolds and Adil, so that it did not show. All the white men except Pike carried rifles and revolvers, and Jai Singh had his spear, as usual.

William Pike led the way from their rooms and through the palace without any attempt at concealment. He often walked about the palace, and the guards all knew him.

"There is nothing to fear," he assured Nick Carter.

The others kept close behind, with a vigilant eye upon Pike's every movement.

Through the gateway, under the great portcullis, and along the drawbridge over the lake they followed, still without any one interfering with their departure.

"Look here, chief!" whispered Chick into Nick Carter's ear. "This isn't natural. There is something crooked about it. We are supposed to be prisoners, and yet we are going out without anybody interfering. What do you make of it?"

"We are called guests, but of course we are really looked on as prisoners," returned Nick. "I can't exactly understand it. But, at the first sign of treachery, you know what you are to do?"

"Shoot Pike?"

"Yes," replied Nick Carter, through his set teeth. "Then dash for the hills."

They had almost cleared the drawbridge, and the two Arnolds held their pistols against William Pike's sides, as they had said they would.

Suddenly a tremendous shout burst forth behind them, as if from the lungs of several hundred men. At the same moment there came the glare of many torches, and the drawbridge began to rise.

"Jump, boys!" thundered Nick Carter, as he gave Pike a push forward.

He leaped off the end of the drawbridge when it was eight or nine feet in the air, and landed on the soft turf at the other side of the lake.

He heard several others come down with him. Then there was the flash of spears on every side, and a terrifying shriek of pain sounded in his ears.

The drawbridge had been let down again, and he made out the tramp of hundreds of feet on the heavy boards.

"They got him!" cried Patsy's voice at his elbow.

"Who?" asked Nick.

"Pike!"

"What do you mean?"

"Look!"

Nick Carter followed the direction of Patsy's pointing finger, and saw William Pike writhing on the ground. A spear was still in his chest.

The man was not dead. Indeed, he seemed to have wonderful strength considering that he had received a wound which, in the very nature of things, must prove fatal.

He rolled over to one side as Nick approached him, and fixing a glare of vengeful hatred on the detective, gurgled:

"It's all right, Carter! You think I didn't know you! Well, I did. It is not the first time we've met. I always swore I'd get even with you, and I've done it. You sent me to the pen for two years. If it hadn't been for you, my alibi would have stood. Then I came to India, and you've followed me here. Well, you'll never get away alive, and I—I——"

Something welled up in his throat that choked him. He gasped, tried to speak again, and rolled over, dead!

All this had taken only a few seconds.

Nick had seen through this sudden attack, and he knew it was caused by the treachery of this man, who had been caught by one of the spears that had been hurled by the guards of the priest, Calaman.

"I can't pity him!" thought Nick, as he dashed ahead to get out of the glare of light from the torches. "Come on, boys!"

They were not clear yet, however.

Calaman himself appeared on the drawbridge, in the midst of his men, and Nick heard him give orders to "Capture the white men and bring them back!"

"I guess not!" shouted Patsy, somewhere in the gloom. "Whoof!"

This last ejaculation accompanied a clashing of steel, which was immediately followed by the report of a revolver.

"Keep on firing!" cried Nick. "Fire, but run! Make for the hills!"

His little party sent a volley back to the drawbridge, and when Nick glanced back he saw four of the spearmen go down on their faces.

In the middle of them towered the tall form of Calaman, holding up one hand for attention.

"Stop!" he ordered. "Don't cast your spears! Bring them in alive! That's how I want them—alive!"

The hurling of the spears ceased, but a shout from Patsy made Nick run to his side.

"What's the trouble, Patsy?"

"They've got Chick! Look! There's four of them! He's fighting like a wild cat, but what can one do against four? And there are more coming!"

In his excitement, Patsy leveled his revolver at the four men who had surrounded Chick at the very edge of the drawbridge.

"Don't do that, Patsy!" commanded Nick. "You'll be almost sure to get Chick. Come on! Hand to hand!"

"That's what!" bawled Jefferson Arnold. "Hand to hand! Where's Leslie!"

There was no response to this last question, but Jefferson sailed in with his rifle swinging like a club, and cleared a wide space on the drawbridge in an instant.

Jai Singh was wielding his terrible spear, and man after man of the Bolongus went down before his onslaught.

Then there was a countercharge, and the little party retreated, fighting desperately, until they were almost out of the light of the torches.

Nick Carter raised his voice excitedly.

"Forward again!" he shouted. "They're holding Chick! We must get him, whatever happens! At them, boys!"

The great detective usually preserved his coolness under any and all circumstances. But now, when he saw his beloved assistant in the hands of these ruthless mountain men, and realized that only torture and a horrible death could be his end if he were not rescued, he let himself go completely, and became only the warrior who would neither give nor receive quarter.

It was Nick Carter who dashed upon the drawbridge again first. Close at his elbow was Patsy Garvan, with Jai Singh, Adil, and Jefferson Arnold supporting him.

Chick was fighting valiantly, and though at least half a dozen spearmen had him in the middle of them, he was giving them all they could do to prevent his getting away.

One, two, three—went down under blows of his revolver. He had discharged all his cartridges, but the heavy pistol made a splendid war club.

"Hold them off another second!" shouted Nick Carter.

Chick did not reply in words, but he redoubled his efforts against his adversaries, knocking down another one just as he looked over toward his chief.

Undoubtedly what saved Chick's life was the order of Calaman that he should be taken prisoner and not killed. The priest wanted him for certain purposes of his own. What those purposes were Nick Carter knew well enough, in view of the fact that the Festival of the Golden Scarab was set for the morrow.

"A wedge!" called out Nick to the men behind him.

They all understood. Even Jai Singh, who never had seen a football game in his life, comprehended the meaning and efficacy of a formation with a sharp edge, and weight behind it. As soon as Patsy took his place and made a sign, the tall East Indian fell into line.

With Nick Carter himself in the front, the flying wedge cut through a score of swarthy rascals who tried to stop them and made its way to where Chick was still battling for his life.

"Fall in, Chick!" shouted Nick.

There was a scuffle, in which it seemed as if everybody was fighting everybody else. Really, it was a scientific bit of strategy on the part of the white men, opposed to disorganized efforts by their untutored enemy.

The scuffle lasted for only part of a minute. It worked its way across the drawbridge to the outside of the walls, and Nick was bringing his assistant with him to safety.

Then, as the high priest saw his men had failed in their attempt to capture Chick, he gave the order to raise the drawbridge.

The ponderous contrivance flew up, hurling back the spearmen, but leaving Nick Carter and his men outside.

"Bull luck!" ejaculated Patsy. "That's what it is. Couldn't have done it better myself."

"Don't talk! Run!" was Nick Carter's brief order.

They had a clear field now. It was not easy to let the drawbridge down again, because so many of the Bolongus were tangled up in the chains.

Moreover, Calaman did not know for a few minutes that his intended victims had escaped.

When he did find it out and gave the order for the bridge to be lowered, the white men and their two Indian followers were far across the valley and had taken refuge in the hills.

"I guess we're safe enough now, Carter!" ejaculated Jefferson Arnold, with a chuckle. "My! That was a hot time we had! What I can't understand is why some of those fellows with spears didn't get us all toward the end of the scrap. They had every chance, it seemed to me."

"They wanted us alive. That was all," returned Nick. "Where's Leslie?"

"I don't know," answered Jefferson, with a note of anxiety in his voice. "Where did you see him last?"

"Fighting on the drawbridge," replied Chick. "And he was giving a very good account of himself, too. He has Adil with him, I guess. At least, Adil isn't here."

"They're somewhere around," said Jefferson, with a shrug. "So long as Adil is with him, I'm satisfied."

"Leslie had some of that money with him," remarked Chick. "I hope he won't lose it. That would be too bad after all the trouble we've had to get it."

"That wasn't the only thing," returned the millionaire. "I could have stood the loss of the money. But I did want to get that blackguard Pike. A man who would betray a trust like that deserves no mercy."

"He will never betray another in this world," commented Nick solemnly. "He has paid the penalty."

"Well, yes—that's so," murmured Jefferson Arnold thoughtfully. "I am rather sorry for that. You see, I didn't want him killed. A few years in prison would have done him good, perhaps, and he might have been a better man when he came out. I'm glad it was none of our party who had to put him out of the world."

"Yet, if that spearman hadn't got him, it might have been necessary for one of us to do it—so it comes to about the same thing," answered Nick Carter. "However, let's get a little back into the pass, where we can hold it in case any of those rascals from the city take it into their heads to come after us."

"We don't want to go too far back," suggested Chick. "Jai Singh isn't here yet."

"That fellow would find us wherever we went," grunted Jefferson Arnold. "Men of his race are as good on the blind trail as our own Sioux ever were."

There was a few minutes of thoughtful silence.

"We'll go right back to Calcutta as soon as the rest of our party get into camp," was Nick Carter's dictum. "That priest is too vindictive and cunning to let us get away in peace if we don't go at once."

"Then it isn't worth while to light a camp fire?" queried Patsy, in a disappointed tone. "I thought we were going to have a little rest after all that racket."

"A good soldier never thinks about rest till his work is done," shot back Nick Carter reprovingly.

"Gee! Me for the civil life, if that's so," muttered Patsy Garvan to himself. "But I'm glad we got William Pike, anyhow."

THE END.

What adventures befell the brave men in Nick Carter's contingent before their return to civilization will be told in "Straight to the Goal; or, Nick Carter's Strange Challenge," which will appear in NICK CARTER STORIES, No. 135, out April 10th.

Dared for Los Angeles.

By ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

CHAPTER I.

THE "DOWN-AND-OUTER."

Elliot Nash walked leisurely down Hill Street, and at Sixth turned into Central Park. The diagonal walks of reddish-brown cement contrasted strangely with the graceful and feathery pepper trees, the wide-spreading, sturdy palms, and the profusion of scarlet geranium blossoms. the rainbow-hued hydrangea, and the climbing wistaria. A faint wind, tempered by the ocean and by the flood of California sunshine, brought the mist from the towering fountain against his cheeks.

"Dear old Los Angeles!" Nash murmured to himself, drinking deep of the beauty that nature had lavished about him. "I'm surely glad to get back here—even if I am about——"

He broke off with a shrug, and continued slowly along between the rows of peopled benches, hands in his pockets. With a sudden determination, he turned into one of the narrower walks and sank down on the nearest bench, barely glancing at its solitary occupant, who seemed interested in a book. Behind him, a bed of heliotrope sent up a faint and soothing odor, which, after a time, lulled Nash into half a doze.

He was awakened abruptly by a hand falling upon his arm. Turning, he found the man beside him on the bench had closed his book and had moved nearer.

"Say, partner," the man was saying, in a peculiar, husky voice, "would you be willin' to give a lift to a fellow that's up against it?"

Nash studied the other with interest. He bore the marks of the professional "down-and-outer," from his patched, unlaced shoes to the usual puffy and stubbled face. At the same time, Nash noticed the book lying in his lap.

"What's the matter with you?" Nash asked.

"Matter?" The stranger laughed bitterly. "What you askin' that for? Don't I look the answer? I'm down and out, and ain't got a copper. This cussed town has pumped me dry, jus' like it does all the rest of the fools what come out here to find a—paradise. I'm tryin' to get enough coin together to beat it back to God's country."

"Where's that?"

"Why, New York, of course!" snapped the other. "Where else? All this golden sunshine and flower business makes me sick. I want to see it snowin', I do—yes, sir, real snow. I want to get back to Broadway."

"Wonder you didn't stay there," observed Nash, for he was Los Angeles born and bred himself, and it went against his grain to have what he considered the best town on earth "panned," especially by such a character. "We don't need your kind here."

The vagabond lifted a pair of watery blue eyes, and stared at Nash. "Oh, you're one of these native sons, are you? Well, excuse me. I didn't know—that's all. I thought you was like—like the rest of the poor hobos settin' around these parks. This sunshine and summer in the winter, and flowers and palm trees don't feed a man's stomach, or put clothes on his back."

"Have you tried to find work?"

"Tried? I've been lookin' for six months! I'm a good man, I am, when I leave the booze alone." He shook his head and passed a grimy hand across the reddish stubble on his chin. "I'm an engineer—worked on the Barge Canal, in New York State, and on the aqueduct there. I'm no slouch. I've tackled every contractin' firm in the city. Guess they didn't like my appearance. I thought I had a line on somethin' the other day. Went and met one of the big bugs that hire the help on this Los Angeles Aqueduct. Said he'd fix me up. Gave me a letter to a foreman on the job."

"Did you get the position?"

"Get it?" He laughed hoarsely. "I guess not! Before I went, I found out I'd probably have to work with the wops and the greasers, haulin' sand and mixin' cement. Well, none of that in mine! I'm too smart for that sort of work."

"You could have started in at the bottom, and shown the foreman you were capable of better things," argued Nash. "A good man never stays down."

"Rot! Don't start preachin' to me. I'm done with this town and the whole State. I'll get back to New York if I have to ride the rods all the way."

"I'm not overloaded with coin," said Nash, with a smile; "but I'm more than willing to slip you a couple of dollars, just to get you out of Los Angeles. We don't want any knockers here."

The man grinned his appreciation. "You can't hand them out any too quick, partner."

Without further argument, Nash took two silver dollars from his pocket and placed them in the other's open, expectant palm.

"Thanks, partner," the man said, his long fingers closing over the money. "These cart wheels sure look good to me. You're a gentleman, you are, even if you do like this burg."

The vagrant started away, and then impulsively stopped. "Say," he remarked, "I want to show my appreciation for this here gift of yours. Do you like poetry?"

"I'm very fond of it," responded Nash. "Why?"

The other man took the book he had been reading from his pocket, peered at the title, and thrust it into Nash's hand.

"Take this. I can't swallow the stuff. Poetry never did make a hit with me."

Nash examined the little, leather-bound volume. It was a new, well-bound edition of Kipling's "Barrack-room Ballads."

"Oh, it don't belong to me," the man said, apparently reading Nash's mind. "I found it on a bench about an hour ago. Just read it, partner, and remember the down-and-outer that wanted to get back to God's country."

"Thank you for it," Nash replied. "I've always wanted a good copy of these verses."

The vagrant rubbed his hands together and looked over to where the big, white Auditorium rose above the slim eucalyptus trees.

"Well," he said, "I'm off this time! It's me for the Santa Fe Station and the softest rod on the Limited. Your two silver boys ought to keep me in eats for a couple of days. Say," he drawled, "maybe I won't be joyful to see real paper dollars again! And just let me get a peek at that Metropolitan Tower once more!" He lowered his voice impressively, as if imparting a great secret: "And, say, you can talk till you're black in the face about this town, and the climate, and the perpetual flowers; but,

honest, now—you've been in New York—did you ever smell anything sweeter than them flowers in Madison Square in May?"

"I never had much time to sit in parks when I was in New York," responded Nash.

"Too bad! Don't know what you've missed. Well, by-by."

The man waved a friendly hand, still grinning, and disappeared around a corner.

Five minutes later Nash followed, going around the large fountain. He walked slowly past the beds of tropical plants, and on to Olive Street. Suddenly remembering the gift the disparager of Los Angeles had bestowed upon him, Nash took it from his pocket, and for the first time examined it closely. As he turned the leaves—some of them uncut—an envelope fell out. He picked it up.

It was unsealed, and addressed to a "Mr. Wilson Hooker, Foreman, Camp No. 47, Los Angeles Aqueduct."

"I wonder if this was of any value to my New York friend?" Nash asked himself. "Or did it belong to him at all?"

He looked at the envelope again, aware by the feel of it that there was a letter inside.

"If it belongs to him, and it's unsealed, I don't see any objection to my looking inside. Possibly I can learn where to send it to him."

Nash drew out the inclosure. The same address that the envelope bore was at the top of the single sheet of paper. Below this ran the following:

"DEAR WILSON: Bearer is O. K. You can trust him. Give him a job at anything. Sincerely, J. SIGSBEE."

CHAPTER II.

LAYING HOLD OF OPPORTUNITY.

Nash folded the letter, returned it to the envelope, and thoughtfully continued over to Broadway, walking up this busy street to Seventh, where he went into the big lobby of his hotel, the Lankershim.

After lighting a cigar, he sank into the nearest chair, and read the letter again. Several remarks passed by the stranger during their scene in the park now came back to him.

"He said he had had a line on a job," Nash reflected. "This letter must have been the answer. Some one in authority has given it to him. And that Los Angeles Aqueduct is some big undertaking, too," he added. "I'd like mighty well to land a job on it. Now, if it had only been my luck to get a letter——"

He stared out through the big hotel windows upon the hurrying crowds of shoppers and tourists.

"By Jove!" he said to himself. "Why not? There's no name mentioned in this letter. I wouldn't be sailing under false colors. Besides, the fellow said he refused to go after the job because he'd probably have to work as a laborer."

The idea grew more inviting. Nash needed work, and needed it badly, in spite of the fact that he was well dressed and smoking a good cigar and living at one of the best hotels. About sixteen dollars was all that stood between him and——

Nash was businesslike in all his affairs; his father had drilled that trait into him; and he knew that in seeking the kind of work he desired, a good front was a desirable asset. If it came to a question of a meal or a clean collar, the collar would win out. He always remembered that a clean shave had gained many a man an opportunity which otherwise might have been denied him.

"I've got just sixteen dollars and thirty-five cents," he said, after counting his capital. "That will last me until the end of the week. I've tried my best to get a job, but somehow jobs are scarce as snowballs on Main Street. Now, here's old Opportunity knocking at my door. The man the letter was given to doesn't want the job. The man into whose hands it has fallen does want it. I won't be harming any one by getting myself a necessary position. And even if it is mixing cement with the wops, or digging in the trenches with the greasers, I guess I can show my worth."

So the affair was settled, and he went upstairs to his room, tossing the book of poems into an opened trunk.

"Wonder where he picked up that volume?" Nash asked himself. "I'd return it if I had half a chance. Something unusual to find a vag reading Kipling. I always did like Rudyard, anyhow, so I'll retain charge of it for the time being."

Elliot Nash, a native son of Los Angeles, had been taken East to school by his parents nearly eight years previous to this; he had been graduated with engineering honors, and had immediately accepted a position on the Barge Canal—that wonderful New York State project, which will give passage for thousand-ton vessels between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. Leaving this, he had become identified with both the New York aqueduct and the Cape Cod canal. Both parents had died recently, and because of it a lonesome feeling had come upon him—a yearning to be back in California, to bask in the perpetual sunlight, to smell the fragrance of the orange groves, to dip in the calm, turquoise Pacific, and to visit once more the scenes he had loved in his boyhood days.

In addition to this, an unfortunate affair made it necessary for him to quietly disappear in order to avoid trouble. He left New York in a raging snowsorm, and traveled two thousand miles overland amid the desolation of ice and snow and freezing winds. Then came the stretch of level desert, the vast waste of red and yellow sand. When his train stopped at rare intervals, he got out and mingled with the usual crowd of excited tourists and the colorful, leather-faced Navahos with their reed baskets, their silver trinkets, decorated pottery, and gaudy rugs. Following this came the long, steady ascent of the coast range, a touch of winter again, and then a straight, breathless drop into paradise. That last night, he went to sleep in his narrow Pullman berth, weary and eyesore with the monotony of it all, only to awaken in the morning with a green world about him and the perfume of the orange blossoms in his nostrils.

A dash through endless groves, where the golden fruit beckoned alluringly, a stop for breakfast at the dreamy little town of San Bernardino, and then on again, past Arrowhead Springs, where nature has marked a gigantic white arrow on the gray of the mountainside, through Pasadena, the home of the millionaires, and at last into Los Angeles—City of the Angels.

With less than fifty dollars in his pocket, Nash had engaged quarters at the Lankershim, and started in to find a position. But a ten-day quest had proved fruitless. He was disappointed, but far from being discouraged,

when this chance adventure in Central Park sent Opportunity into a head-on collision with him.

"It's the aqueduct for me," he murmured to himself that night, as he crept between his sheets. "I can't stay here any longer. I've got enough coin to square up my bill and pay my passage to San Fernando. I'll leave my trunk here for a while." He fell silent for the interval, staring up at the ceiling. "I wonder what it'll be? Mixing cement? Well, if it is, I'll show them I am one peach of a mixer!"

CHAPTER III.

UP THE SAN FERNANDO ROAD.

Early next morning, Nash left the hotel and made for the Southern Pacific Station on Fifth Street. Before noon he had stepped off the train in the quaint and sleepy little town of San Fernando. This place marked the terminal of the proposed Los Angeles Aqueduct, and the huge reservoir in course of construction at the mouth of the San Francisquito Cañon was to hold in check and in readiness the millions of gallons of water which the citizens of Los Angeles might command at the turn of a faucet.

In the depot for supplies, the hurry and bustle at certain points interested Nash. The sight of the huge steam shovels, the towering derricks, the endless cars of cement, and the sections of steel piping all served to quicken his pulse and bring the color to his cheeks.

To find the location of Camp 47 was an easy task, and in an hour after the train had set him down, Nash was riding on a load of cement up the rock-hewn road, and behind eight sweating mules that apparently knew more about their business than did the driver, Joe Giogi, a swearing, black-eyed, barechested son of Italy.

"You want Forty-seven?" he questioned swiftly. "Sure thing! I take you there. You come with me. Long ride—maybe four hour."

So Nash swung up to the high seat beside Joe, and they started amid a volley of imprecations from the latter, the creak of the straining harness, and the encouraging shouts of the laborers in the little yard.

"You come to look for a job, maybe?" inquired the driver, once they were riding smoothly, and the town was dropping away behind them.

"Maybe, yes," answered Nash, evading a direct response.

The weather-scarred, sun-blackened fingers of the driver skillfully arranged the dozen or more reins, and Nash marveled at the ease and dexterity with which it was accomplished. Finally Joe spoke again, this time more seriously.

"All theese work and dig like the devil," he announced. "Jus' so Los Angeles she get a drink of water. One beeg job it is."

"Yes," Nash said, all the time critically examining the road up which they toiled, and realizing that every inch of it had been cut from living rock that the supplies might be brought quickly into the different camps along it. "It is one big job, Joe. And all for a drink of water."

For two hours they rode on, now dipping into attractive green meadows, now skirting the naked and barren desert, now following the very rim of the Sierras. The mules jogged along in their own way; Joe nodded wearily in his seat; Nash, far too interested in the passing country, kept his eyes on the alert. The very road itself presented such a remarkable engineering problem that frequent and amazed exclamations fell from his lips. "I thought all the big jobs were in the East," he told himself. "But here is where I think otherwise. Why, it must have cost a good many millions just to get this road through, before a shovelful of dirt was excavated on the actual aqueduct building."

When another hour had slipped by—all too quickly for Nash—a stranger hailed them from a distant hillside, and as Joe drew in his reins, glad to give his animals a breathing spell, the man came sliding down to the road.

In faded and dirty khaki, rock-scuffed boots, soft shirt, and flapping sombrero, the newcomer advanced to the wagon and pulled himself to the top of the piled cement bags. Nash had already deserted the lofty seat in front for this broad and more comfortable resting place, and promptly made room on the blanket for the new arrival. Joe had paid little or no attention to this passenger, and no sooner had he gained the top of the load than Joe snapped his long whip and sent his mules forward amid a sudden, choking cloud of dust.

Nash coughed, for the alkali stung his throat and smarted in his eyes. When he recovered, he found the man eying him with evident curiosity.

"Stranger here, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Thought so. When you stay here a time you get used to this infernal alkali. Get so you eat it in your grub and drink it in your whisky. The saloon up at our camp makes a feature of aqueduct cocktails. And it's nothing in the world but alcohol, Worcestershire sauce, and alkali. But beggars can't be choosers."

The speaker's face, because of the constant exposure to the sun, was burned to a reddish-brown. There were pools of darker shadows beneath his eyes, and many hard lines around them and around his thin lips. Nash had an instant dislike for the fellow, and did not welcome the companionship.

The man rolled a cigarette and smoked for a minute, studying his dirty boots, which were crossed before him. Presently, with a sharp jerk of his head, he removed his cigarette and turned.

"What you doing in this district? Working on the job?"

"Not at present."

"Any particular place you're bound for?"

"Yes—Camp Forty-seven."

The other's eyes narrowed. "So? Where are you from?"

"I came from Los Angeles this morning," Nash said quietly, annoyed by the direct questions, but unwilling to make trouble.

His companion's interest deepened instantly.

"Newspaper man, eh?" He said this evidently because of Nash's trim and clean appearance.

"Hardly that," Nash answered, smiling at the mistake.

"Well, you seem blamed afraid of explaining," the other broke out, snapping away his cigarette butt. "And let me tell you one thing, my friend," he added, leaning nearer: "A man who doesn't want his business known around these parts had better stay away. It isn't at all healthy. Understand?"

"Possibly," Nash answered. "But what business I have

in this district is my own affair, and it isn't at all necessary to discuss it with every man I meet on the road."

"I guess you'll discuss it with me," snarled the other.

"Why?" Nash was anxious to know why his companion seemed to be so confident.

"Why? Well, didn't you say you were bound for Camp Forty-seven?"

"I did. What has that to do with my explaining to you?"

"I won't allow you inside the camp until you do," was the instant retort.

"What right have you to stop me?"

"I happen to be foreman there—that's why."

CHAPTER IV.

CAMP FORTY-SEVEN.

This abrupt announcement changed Nash's view of the situation. He remembered the letter he carried in his pocket, and to whom it was addressed.

"You are Wilson Hooker?" he asked.

The foreman nodded. "That's me."

"I came from Los Angeles this morning especially to find you," Nash explained. "I want a job."

"What can you do?"

"I'm willing to do anything from digging trenches to——"

The foreman shrugged. "I don't need any one at present. I've ten men to every place."

"As for references," Nash said, ignoring the other's declaration, "I have previously worked on——"

"I said I didn't need any more help—and I mean it," broke in the foreman.

"That isn't the question, Mr. Hooker. I didn't ask if you needed a man. I merely asked for a position. I have a letter here which you might like to see."

The foreman evinced immediate interest. Nash brought out the letter and handed it to him. Hooker accepted it with a frown, read it through, and instantly he did so a transformation took place. His frown dissolved, his former suspicious and dubious manner became one of cordiality.

"Why didn't you say something about this at first?" he exclaimed. "Of course I'll find a place for you. Whatever Sigsbee says goes—especially in Camp Forty-seven."

The abrupt and unexpected demeanor—the smile succeeding the frown—and the promptness with which the foreman offered him a position were not lost upon Nash. The latter realized vaguely, but none the less certainly, that the signature at the bottom of that letter carried a great deal of weight. Nash had never heard of Jim Sigsbee, but imagined he must be some one high in authority—possibly engineer in chief of the construction corps. He wondered how a man of the vagrant's type had managed to gain such a letter—and for the moment his conscience troubled him. Hooker would have refused him a position had not these few written words and the seemingly magic name of Sigsbee been offered. Then, he wondered, was he doing the right thing by all concerned in remaining silent and accepting?

"Here's where we get off," Hooker announced. "We'll cut across the hill and make the camp in five minutes."

Nash obeyed, his mind fully made up. He would accept. The vagrant had had the opportunity to obtain a position, and had scorned it. Nash argued with himself that he was practically penniless, and that a job, however insignificant, was a necessity. He climbed down from the cement and followed the lead of the foreman, who by this time was disappearing over the shoulder of the hill.

"You gets the job?" yelled Joe, the driver, waving his hand and grinning, apparently having overheard some of the conversation. "Good for you! Maybe I see you again some day. Good-by!"

Nash returned Joe's good wishes, and soon caught up with Hooker. They walked side by side down the rough trail, winding in and out, gradually reaching a lower level.

"I like your style," said the foreman, breaking the silence that lasted between them. "You have one virtue that spells success."

"What is that?"

"You know how to hold your tongue. That's a valuable asset on this job."

Rounding a cliff in their descent, Nash saw a clutter of boxlike houses spread out below him. Then the first, faint sounds of the construction work came to his ears—the clatter of steel, cries of men, snorting locomotives, and the peculiar whine of the glistening cables as they tightened over the derrick wheels. Ugly, white concrete walls, over which men scrambled like so many flies, contrasted vividly against the green of the valley.

Spiderlike webs of steel lifted here and there against the tender blue of the sky; great sections of piping dangled from cables apparently no larger than thread.

"There's the camp," said Hooker. "Biggest on the job. Two thousand men—wops, Japs, Hindus, and greasers included; also seven hundred horses." After a pause, he added: "And the nastiest stretch of construction on the whole aqueduct."

Every fiber in Nash's body responded to this wonderful scene of activity, as a motor to a suddenly released current. He was keen to be there among the other workers.

They soon reached the first of the corrugated-iron shacks, all of which were built facing the single, tortuous street.

"You can have that little cabin back there," Hooker told him. "It's empty now. This large one belongs to me—sort of an executive headquarters. And, by the way, what am I to call you?"

"Elliot Nash."

"Good!" The foreman grinned. "Sounds O. K. I hope we get along pleasantly, Nash."

"I hope we do," echoed Nash—and he meant it.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAY'S WORK.

The next few days, for Nash, were filled with excitement—the grasping of the thousand and one details, the understanding of the remarkable system that prevailed under Hooker's direction, and the method in which the work was carried forward. Every minute of the eight hours counted; in the tunnel work, three shifts kept the bore progressing at the rate of twelve feet a day, which, as Nash soon learned, was a world's record for hard rock.

Hooker put Nash on the easiest part of the construction work, namely, the conduit building, possibly because

it required less technical knowledge and was the cleanest. Nash would have preferred a more responsible place, but as it was to serve merely as an opening wedge—to show the foreman he was capable of better things—he did not demur.

"I'll put you under Macmillan," Hooker said. "He's my first assistant on the conduit work. You'll take his orders. Know anything about cement?"

Nash smiled. "A little," he admitted.

"Well, you'll learn. Find out all you can. Macmillan will probably put you at checking up the cubic feet laid; meanwhile you can watch the work and get the hang of things. I'm off for San Fernando."

Previous to this, Nash had met Macmillan—most of the subforemen ate at the same general table—and when he presented himself with the information that Hooker had ordered him on this part of the job, Macmillan accepted it as final.

"What can you do?" he growled, apparently not pleased over breaking in a new hand.

"Give me a chance at anything," Nash answered.

"Good at figures?"

"Yes."

Macmillan grunted. "Get that steel tape and measure up the concrete laid last week. It's a quarter of a mile behind us. The carpenters are taking off the forms. I've had it checked once, but a double count won't do any harm—and we'll see how much you know."

He whirled abruptly on his heel and yelled something up to the engineer of the big electric shovel. Nash did not wait for further orders, but found the tape and tramped off down the gully in the direction indicated by the subforeman.

For several miles here the course of the future aqueduct lay along the side of the mountain, flanked deep with soil. This made the excavation work easy. Huge steam and electric shovels, working with the method and precision of a human hand, could dig a trench as swiftly as the carpenters could follow with their falsework.

The plastic mass of sand, gravel, and cement was poured into these wooden forms and allowed to harden for a week, after which time all the molds were stripped away. Then measurements were taken of the completed work, checked back through the different books, and finally O. K.'d by the foreman of the camp.

Nash found his task quite easy, and followed right at the heels of the carpenters as they stripped off the wooden molds, entering the cubic yards in his notebook. At four o'clock he had finished, and promptly returned to Macmillan.

"What you doing back here at this hour?" snapped the subforeman. "Get tired?"

"I've finished," Nash replied.

"Finished? You mean you've checked up all that concrete?"

"Here's the book. Look for yourself."

Macmillan took the book, rapidly thumbed the pages, and then swore softly. "I didn't think it was in you, young man," he declared. "Why, the regular fellow often takes two days on the same job."

"It's really a simple matter, once you get the hang of it," Nash said modestly. "Anything else you want me to do?"

Macmillan reflected a moment; his cold eyes traveling from Nash's muddy boots to the slouch hat that covered his brown hair. It was a critical, impersonal glance that one might bestow upon a piece of interesting and complicated machinery. Nash realized he was being weighed in the balance. The subforeman was surprised, but did not want to betray his feelings; finally he said, in a matter-of-fact tone:

"Hooker left orders that we were to test a length of the finished conduit to-day. Suppose you could attend to it?"

"Certainly," Nash replied, without hesitation.

"Very well, then. You'll find a gang of wops a quarter of a mile down the line, awaiting orders. You hurry down and start things. I'll happen along presently—soon as I get this confounded shovel to working right, and help you out."

Satisfied that Macmillan's opinion of him was an agreeable one, Nash hurried away, and soon reached the finished stretch of glistening concrete. Here a group of laborers were resting. Nash gave out his orders, and instantly the men were running this way and that, preparing for the test.

Hundreds of sandbags had been conveniently placed, and these were dumped into the conduit, damming it for a length of several hundred feet. Into this improvised basin a stream of water was turned. On all concrete work a certain amount of seepage and percolation is naturally expected, and it is to determine the exact amount that these tests are made.

Superintending the placing of the sandbags at each end of the finished section of the conduit, Nash did not examine closely the walls until the first water began to pour from the huge nozzle. Standing on the cement floor, protected by a slicker and hip boots, which he had borrowed from one of the men, he unintentionally struck the steel-nosed pole he carried against the white wall.

Instantly recognizing the new sound—one that should not have been given—he broke into a shout:

"Stop that water! Stop it!"

The man guiding the nozzle waved a hand to some one stationed back on the hill, and the stream was shut off.

"Get the hose out of the way, boys," he said sharply. "We won't need it this afternoon."

The men frowned, but offered no objection. They reluctantly recoiled the hose, and began shifting the sandbags. While this was in progress, Macmillan strode up. By this time, Nash had finished with his observations in the conduit and had climbed to the rim, where he was removing his boots.

"What's this?" asked Macmillan, aware that something out of the ordinary was going on. "What are they coiling up that hose for?"

"I ordered them to do so," calmly replied Nash.

"You did? Well, I like your nerve! What in Sam Hill have you got to say about testing this conduit? I asked you to come here and start operations. Now you do the very opposite thing."

"I wouldn't have ordered the men to stop if I didn't think it necessary, Mr. Macmillan."

"Is that so?" the other sneered, hands to his hips. The laborers had gathered around and seemed to be enjoying the argument.

"I got the bags in, and started the water, when I

found the concrete wasn't in proper condition. I couldn't do other than stop the test."

"What's the matter with that concrete?" roared Macmillan. "I put it in myself two weeks ago. I want you to understand, young fellow, that I've been laying concrete for ten years, and I ought to know what I'm talking about."

"Very well," responded Nash. "There isn't any argument. The concrete is too soft as it stands to-day. If the water was turned into the conduit now, the whole length of it would crumble like sugar."

The subforeman's face was a study; the tan and the dirt prevented it from changing color, but in spite of this Nash was aware that Macmillan's temper was at blood heat.

"You lily-fingered shrimp, you!" he bellowed. "What do you mean by coming around and running my affairs? Just because I gave you a little authority, you think you can dictate to me, eh? Hey, you lazy sons of guns," he called, addressing the laborers standing about, grinning, "pick up that hose and turn her into the conduit—and be quick about it!"

Nash flushed. "I don't like to argue, Macmillan, but remember that I have warned you."

"Remember bosh!" exclaimed the other savagely.

In another five minutes the sandbags were once more in place, and the water was roaring into the dammed basin. Nash watched the operation without further words. When the water began to flow over the edges of the conduit, and it was ordered shut off, Macmillan turned to him with a leer

"Well, what's the matter with that cement, eh? Wouldn't hold, you said! Bah! Look at it! Solid as a piece of granite. Next time you get any advice just keep it to yourself."

A newcomer pushed his way through the group gathered about the two men. Both of the latter turned at once. It was Hooker, the foreman of the camp.

"Hello!" he said. "What's the row?"

Macmillan waved a hand toward Nash. "This fellow you sent over to me this morning has been trying to hand out advice."

"How's that?"

"I sent him here to test this conduit, as you'd ordered, and he refused to do it."

Hooker frowned. "Is that right, Nash?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you refuse?" the foreman demanded.

"Because that length of concrete is in no condition for a test, Mr. Hooker. It's soft. I told Macmillan about it, but he only laughed."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the subforeman, pointing to the subject of the dispute. "There it is! What's the matter with it? The water's holding. This man is trying to show off; that's all."

Hooker stepped nearer, and knelt beside the cement rim. As he bent his head, some one behind him yelled. The next instant, with a roar, the whole side of the conduit crumbled away. Hooker caught himself just in time. The excited laborers were shouting like mad.

Nash was the least surprised of the crowd. He had read the signs in the peculiar ring of the concrete. He knew it was too soft to stand the tons of water; he had been helpless before the subforeman's authority. Now, smiling at little at the scared face of Macmillan, he stood vindicated.

After the excitement had died away, Hooker looked at Nash.

"I guess you were right, after all," he said quietly.

Macmillan recovered sufficiently to defend himself. "This isn't the first conduit that's bursted," he cried. "Accidents will happen. I tell you, that cement was sound as a dollar."

Hooker turned to face him. "I suppose, after Nash warned you, you examined the length of conduit very carefully?"

Macmillan flushed and stammered. "Well, not exactly," he said, conscious of his predicament. "But I—knew—knew there——"

"You mean, you thought you knew—isn't that it?" Hooker interrupted sternly. "You hated to admit your ignorance. To tell the truth, Mac, there's been altogether too many of these tests turning failures—too much time and money wasted. The engineer in chief is complaining. I can't be everywhere, so I trusted you. You've fallen down. I'm sorry, Mac, but you'd, better drop over to the shack in the morning and get your money."

The subforeman tossed his head indifferently. "Fired, eh? Well, maybe it's for the best. When it comes to taking a white-fingered kid's advice and ignoring mine, I give up."

He turned on his heel and strode away.

Five minutes later Hooker and Nash were walking slowly back toward camp and headquarters. Neither had spoken for the interval. Finally Hooker said bluntly:

"Nash, you know a lot more about this business than you're telling. Isn't that so?"

"Yes, sir. I'm a graduate engineer—four years at college and three years of practical experience." Nash confessed openly and frankly, now that his position was established. He had proved his worth and had reason to be proud of it. "I've been working in the East all the time. I was on the New York aqueduct until last September."

"What made you leave?" the foreman asked.

Only for an instant did he hesitate. "Because I—hurt a man," Nash said, taken somewhat aback by the unexpected question.

Hooker looked swiftly into the speaker's eyes, and smiled—a peculiar, leering, knowing smile that brought the color to Nash's cheeks.

"Is that so? Well, you couldn't have picked out a better place than this. No questions asked, and none expected. Do you know, Nash, I'm liking you better and better every day. You'll come up to expectations, all right. By the way," he said later, "to-morrow you are to take the position of conduit foreman—Macmillan's old job."

TO BE CONTINUED.

USES FOR SUMMER SCHOOLS.

Little Brother—"What are these summer schools that folks talk about?"

Little Sister—"Oh, they are places where school-teachers go every vacation to study up so we won't get ahead of 'em."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Future Ministers Learn How to Box.

Classes in boxing and wrestling have been introduced at Willamette University as regular required athletic sports. Willamette is a Methodist institution, in Salem, Ore., which educates young men for the ministry as one of the branches of its work. The boxing classes are conducted on the tournament plan, in order that every man may engage in at least two fistic contests.

Carrier Pigeon as a Mascot.

Dining car No. 211, attached to the Great Northern trains running between Seattle, Portland, and Spokane, has acquired a mascot in the shape of a carrier pigeon that apparently prefers the hazardous existence of a railroader to wild, free life on the wing. The pigeon was found lying half frozen near the depot, and one of the porters took the pigeon into the kitchen and fed and warmed it back to life, and the grateful bird responded to the kind treatment by refusing to leave when it had completely recovered.

For Accurate Cutting.

It is difficult to do all kinds of accurate cutting with ordinary shears. Considering the length of time shears have been in use, it seems strange that there have not been more departures from the old type. An inventor has come forward with an improvement for the cutting of patterns and similar work. These shears have a side extension, and it is claimed that they make accurate work much easier, as with them the operator is enabled to follow the markings, for the reason that he can see all around the cutting blades as they pass through the material.

Farmer Kills the Wild Boar.

The much-discussed wild boar which for a month has excited the inhabitants of the farming districts north of West Brookfield Center, Mass., is dead. Henry Bishop killed it.

Bishop was attracted by the disturbed action of his dog, and taking his gun, started for the piggery near the brook, in the rear of his farm. He suddenly saw the animal coming toward him through the swamp, and fired, the shot piercing the boar in the back, breaking his spine.

Mr. Bishop loaded his captive on a sled and brought it to the barn, where it was found to weigh only 125 pounds. The severe weather to which the animal was exposed, and the lack of food, tended to reduce its weight.

Mink Farm Latest in Fur-producing Line.

F. C. Tibbetts, of Portland, Me., proposes to breed mink for the pelt. He has studied the mink for years, has corresponded with producers of mink and purchasers of mink hides. He finds that mink fur is a very desirable sort of fur. Not only is it warm, but it is smooth and of fine texture and has remarkable heat-producing qualities.

It has also been demonstrated to him that the mink will thrive in Maine, or, at least, it should thrive there. The climate and soil conditions, he says, are just right for the mink, and the best spot in Maine is down on Deer Island, Casco Bay. It is there he proposes to establish his mink farm.

It may surprise folks to know that the mink is a highly civilized animal. In many respects he bears a marked resemblance to the human family.

Most people have a notion that the mink prefers a hole in the ground as a place of abode to anything else in the world. Perish the thought! Tibbetts says it is not so. His say-so is backed up by his investigations and years of study of the mink family.

He says that given his choice between a hole in the ground and a box filled with clean straw, the rent being the same, Mr. and Mrs. Mink will decide in favor of the box. Likewise, once having set up housekeeping in the box, the mink family will never make the error of crawling into any other box. They know their own box from the box of any other mink family. This is something worth knowing about mink.

Tibbetts has found that ranch-bred mink are the best with which to start a mink farm. He says they are hardy and reproduce rapidly. He feels that the venture will prove a success. A good mink pelt is worth from nine to thirteen dollars.

Man Selects Coffin for Himself and Wife.

"I have practically lived it through," said former Mayor William L. Rice, of Bristol, Va., when this week he entered an undertaking establishment in Bristol and purchased two low-priced coffins—one for himself and one for his wife.

Mrs. Rice was at first opposed to the idea of having the coffins placed in the home where the aged couple reside alone, but after hearing the reasons advanced by her husband, she made no further objection, and is reconciled.

Foreman of Jeff Davis Jury.

Josiah Millard, eighty-nine years old, of Baltimore, Md., a friend of President Lincoln and foreman of the jury that convicted Jefferson Davis of treason, recently married Miss Martha E. Streeks, twenty-six years his junior. The wedding was in accordance with the deathbed wish of Millard's first wife, who died five years ago, and who had been nursed by Miss Streeks.

Millard is a native of Massachusetts, but lived in Virginia at the outbreak of the war. His Union sympathies got him into trouble, and he was the first Union man arrested during the war.

Appointed internal-revenue assessor by Lincoln, he was removed by Johnson, but reappointed by Grant, and held office until it was abolished. He has since held Federal appointments.

Record of One Bird's Meal.

A student at the University of Wisconsin, who is making experiments in the food consumption of birds, has under observation a little bird, known as the Virginia rail, which in the course of two days eats more than its own weight in food. Although the bird weighs only a half

pound, its menu of one day recently consisted of one caterpillar, fifteen flies, one stickleback fish, 2½ inches long; two small sunfish, 1½ inches long; one water scorpion, three inches long; three water bugs, twelve meal worms, twelve grasshoppers, and fourteen amphipoda. Live hornets do not cause any irritation. It ate five of them on this same day. To the above add one crawfish, two inches long; one snake, eight inches long, and one frog, 1½ inches long.

Eugenics Law Slams Cupid.

The State board of health, of Wisconsin, in its annual report shows that since the eugenics law went into effect January 1, 1914, the number of marriages in Wisconsin dropped 3,800. In 1913 there were 21,052 marriages and in 1914 only 17,252.

There were in 1914, however, eighty-seven recorded common-law marriages, just as valid in law as the ceremony kind, but not under eugenic requirements. The State board says many persons went into some other State to be married rather than submit to the medical examination.

Electric Trap Kills Rats.

Employees of a livery barn at Greencastle, Ind., have found a new way of killing rats caught around the barn. They have arranged a trap so that it can be attached to an electrically charged wire. When the current is turned on, the rats in the trap are shocked so severely that they live only a few minutes.

Dying, He Saves Train from Wreck.

Mortally wounded by a pistol shot, Kihara, Japanese section foreman, used the last of his strength to set a torpedo on the tracks of the Salt Lake route near Milford, Utah, to save the east-bound Pacific Limited train from possible wreck.

Kihara was shot by Mexicans who composed his force. They fled, leaving the hand car on the rails. The wounded man tried in vain to remove the car alone, and then dragged himself down the track with a torpedo, which he placed to check the train. The train stopped in response to the signal and brought Kihara to Milford, where he died.

Spoils Tooth on Raw Oyster.

F. J. Ham, of New York, broke a gold tooth crown on a pearl in a raw oyster at the Royal James Inn, at South Norwalk, Conn. Mr. Ham was indignant until a jeweler told him the pearl was worth fifty dollars. He says he is willing to break some more ten-dollar gold crowns on fifty-dollar pearls.

When Noise Breaks a Window.

Noise is an irregular wave in the air—which is a real thing, and has weight and power, remember. A wave of air may break a window exactly as the wave in the sea will break a breakwater, though, as the name tells us, the breakwater will break the wave, as long as that wave is not too strong.

If you will think a minute you will see that every time a noise gets through a shut window it shakes the window. If the noise is coming in from the street, the air outside is thrown into waves which pass through it until they strike the window, and shake it; then the window shakes the air inside the room in exactly the same way as the air outside shook it, only perhaps not quite so strongly. And so the noise reaches you, just as if you had heard it outside, only not quite so loud. Well, plainly, the noise has only to be loud enough—that is to say, the waves in the air have only to be big enough—to shake the window more than it can stand, and then it breaks.

Odd Real-estate Discovery.

For over thirty years four well-known families of Appleton, Wis., have been living in homes they supposed they owned, but did not. They bought on pocket-map description instead of official map. John Freude owns the home of William Moyle, across the street from him, and Moyle owns Freude's supposed home. The same situation is found in the cases of Peter Zonne and Edward Jennerjahn.

How Much Does Snow Weigh?

Handbooks of useful information, as they are called, do not give the weight of a cubic foot of snow, so Charles S. Evans and Leonard S. Jones, lawyers, of Edenburg, Pa., carefully measured a cubic foot of the wet snow which fell on Tuesday and found it weighed 14.58 pounds.

Wednesday and Thursday were very cold, and much of the dampness in the snow evaporated. Evans and Jones overlooked this fact when they wagered Elmer Davis and Edward O. Jones that snow weighs 14.58 pounds to the cubic foot.

When the quartet weighed a second foot of snow it was found to weigh 11.07 pounds. Then Evans and Jones entertained at dinner.

Belled Buzzard in Georgia.

That mysterious creature, "the belled buzzard," has made its appearance in Banks County, Ga., for the first time in fifty years. Just after the war closed, a buzzard was captured near the Line Church by Reuben Jordan, and a small bell fastened around its neck. It flew straight into the air and turned southward swiftly.

A few days ago Connie N. Watts was going along the road near Hallingsworth and heard a bell tinkling in the air. He looked up and there was a buzzard right over his head. Connie believes, as do many of the older folks of the neighborhood, that it was the same belled buzzard turned loose fifty years ago.

Schoolboy Blinded by Ink.

Sitting at his desk in the Hershey, Pa., High School, Raymond Shrismer, a member of the senior class, accidentally upset his ink bottle. Some of the fluid splashed into his open eyes and he startled the school by screaming: "I am blind."

He was rushed to a specialist, but it is feared he will never recover his eyesight. It is believed that the ink contained some powerful chemical that resulted in paralysis of the optic nerve. Teachers say that Raymond is one of the best pupils of his class.

Let Hair and Whiskers Grow.

"Let your hair grow and defy the doctors," is the health creed of Andrew Snellgrove, aged seventy-five, of Ann Arbor, Mich., who never had a hair cut, never had a shave—and has never consulted a doctor.

Snellgrove was a circuit rider in the Middle West in

the early sixties, but, despite the many hardships he endured, he was never ill. He believes he owes his health to his whiskers. "My whiskers protected my throat, just as nature intended they should do. My hair protected my neck. I never caught cold, was never sick. Why shave, anyway?"

"Wish This Done," Signed A. Lincoln.

A letter, faded with age, bearing a single line: "Wish this done. A. Lincoln," is one of the treasured possessions of Captain Daniel Delehanty, U. S. N., now stationed at Pelham, N. Y. And back of it is a story that is now given to the public.

In the darkest period of the Civil War, President Lincoln was bowed by trouble. He summoned Henry Ward Beecher and Archbishop John Hughes, of New York, to Washington. It looked, he told them, as if the Confederacy would be recognized by England and France. He sent Henry Ward Beecher to England and Archbishop Hughes to France to talk in the cities and towns and arouse sympathy for the cause of the North.

The archbishop was the first to return, reporting that France had small sympathy with the North, particularly among the better classes. Bad as this news was, the president was grateful to the archbishop for his report. He thanked him and added that if there was anything he could do for the archibshop personally he should be glad.

The archbishop replied that there was nothing—but just as he was about to leave, he said:

"There is a boy, the son of a dear friend of mine, who wishes to be a soldier, but he is too young. If he could go to West Point——"

When the archbishop left, it was with the assurance that the boy would be admitted.

When he returned to New York, he summoned the lad and told him that the president had offered him an appointment to West Point.

But Daniel Delehanty—for he it was—instead of being overjoyed, said: "I want to go to Annapolis."

"But there is no help for it now; the president appointed you to West Point, and there you go," returned the archbishop.

Finally, however, the archbishop promised that, if by the next day he still felt averse to it, he would write the president that the appointment could not be accepted. Next day the boy returned and said he couldn't resign himself to going to West Point.

"Well, I can ask the president to change the appointment," the archbishop said. "But if you want to go to Washington yourself, I'll write a letter to him."

The archbishop wrote the letter, telling the boy that in all probability he would not see the president, but to see ——, and if it was possible, he would arrange it for him.

Off started the boy. He found the man the archbishop had told him about, and told him of the letter. The man, a messenger for the president, made him wait a minute. On his return, he said he had called the president out of a cabinet meeting, and that he was waiting at the head of the stairs.

The boy mounted the stairs. In recalling the incident, Captain Delehanty says that his most vivid recollection is of a pair of slippers which the president wore, with embroidered eyes on them. They so fascinated the flustered boy that he kept his eyes on them; they looked like tiger's eyes. He was standing speechless, his eyes glued to the slippers, when he heard the president say: "You have a letter to me from Archbishop Hughes?"

The boy held out the letter. The president read it and then asked: "You want to go to Annapolis?"

"Yes, Mr. Lincoln."

The president placed the letter against the wall and added the line:

"I wish this done. A. Lincoln."

A wild desire to tell this tall, sad-eyed man how much it meant to him raced through the boy's head. All kinds of grateful speeches crowded his brain. But all he said was: "Mr. President, you'll never regret what you have done this day."

The president smiled and turned back to the door of the cabinet room, while the lad, his self-possession returned, bounded away to the navy department. Within half an hour he had his appointment to the naval academy.

Great are the Claims of "Conjure Man."

In most of the old "before-the-war" towns of Missouri there is an ancient negro who is regarded with superstitious reverence by a good many more people than will confess it. This individual is known as the "Conjure Man," and many of the darkies who smile when they talk about him will slip around and invoke his aid in cases of distress.

The Conjure Man always professes the deepest piety. Were he in league with evil spirits, no negro would go within a mile of him. It is only the good spirits he calls upon. In nearly every case the Conjure Man is ignorant, but wonderfully cunning. He is generally honest, however, in supposing that he has some sort of a gift that will ward off evil influences. You can find in Missouri a great many old white people who will, in a somewhat backward way, admit that they have the same sort of influence.

The Conjure Man labors to create the impression that nothing is impossible for him. He will sell, for a moderate consideration, good-luck charms to bring lovers together. He will visit a home where there has been domestic trouble for the purpose of locating and driving out evil influences. When anything goes wrong, it is always the devil sowing seeds of discord, and it is the Conjure Man's province to find where these seeds are planted and to yank them out by the roots.

There perambulates about some northern Missouri towns a distinguished member of the profession known as "Blue Jacket." He is nigh on to eighty, but will cheerfully admit to one hundred if pressed. You might call Blue Jacket the dean of the Conjure Men, for his years and reputed cures well entitle him to the distinction.

One evil day doubts crept into the mind of a Macon negro regarding his wife's fidelity, and he sent an urgent message to Blue Jacket to come a-runnin' and remove the baleful influence. Blue Jacket came promptly and after sniffing about the yard, told his client that in a board buried in the yard was an old rusty nail which kept a house vine from growing; that in order to relieve the domestic turmoil it would be necessary to find and remove that nail, and that it would cost—after a deal of calculation—twenty-nine dollars and six bits. The dis-

tressed client produced the money and Blue Jacket pulled out a bottle and attached a fishing line. Then he went about the yard, holding the thing up, and talking in a queer lingo. Presently the "diviner" began to oscillate, and Blue Jacket asked for a spade. In a few minutes he found an old board, near the wall, and, sure enough, there was a rusty nail in it, which had been touching the roots of the house vine.

It looked like a gilt-edged conjure job, and the client would have been entirely satisfied had not his wife eloped that night with the man of whom he was jealous. The prosecuting attorney was appealed to the next day for a warrant against Blue Jacket, but the officer told the troubled husband that according to his own story, Blue Jacket was only agreeing to find a board with a rusty nail in it, and he had done it.

Blue Jacket was once commissioned to find out who was stealing coal from a colored Baptist church in Macon County. Inside of twelve hours he had a confession from the janitor. It was looked upon as a most miraculous case for a while, and then somebody found how it was done. Blue Jacket went at the job in a commonsense way. He examined the church coal bin and saw steps leading from it to the janitor's home, and alongside the footprints were small particles of coal which had sifted through the leaky bucket.

"It is a remarkable thing how strong a hold the Conjure Man has upon some of the negroes, particularly in the South," remarked the Reverend A. F. Jenkins, who was formerly pastor of the African M. E. Church at Keota, another mining town of Macon County. "One of the most noted of whom I recall just now was known as 'Doctor' George Jones. He practiced all through Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. A Conjure Man with a reputation gets calls from a wider territory than the most noted of physicians. And he charges just what he wants, and generally gets his money down before he turns a peg. The president is impressed with no greater dignity than the Conjure Man with a reputation. And once he turns a trick which gives him standing, it is mighty hard to discredit him.

"I was in charge of the church at Vicksburg when I first had the pleasure of meeting the renowned 'Doctor' Jones. He was about fifty years of age, but over one hundred in impressiveness and dignity. From somewhere he had collected a lot of big, grandly sounding words and scientific terms with which he paralyzed his more ignorant constituents, which they took for inspired utterance. I begged my people to let him alone. He sent word if I didn't quit interfering with his business he would set the witches on me. When I heard of that threat I resolved to give him a chance. One day when some of my members were talking with me, Doctor Jones came along, walking very stately down the street.

"'Doctor,' said I, 'I've just been telling these people you were a humbug, and that I wasn't afraid of all the witches you could turn loose. Now, if you've got any about you anywhere, I wish you'd call 'em up. I won't run.'

"The people moved about away from danger, and I could see they were shocked at my foolhardiness. But the Conjure Man was too adroit.

"'Brother Jenkins,' he said, in a pitying tone, 'I have the greatest ambiguity for you—I really has. You will be given a while for acceleration, and if you don't submit to the tergiversation of the spheriods, you will be struck dead—next year.'

"At the dreadful malediction the brothers shuddered, and looked appealingly at me. I saw they firmly believed it was directly due to Doctor Jones' magnanimity that the witches didn't come sailing down on their broomsticks instantly and bear me away. The incident strengthened the humbug's influence with them."

Obeying the Lure of Buried Treasure.

Searching for Pirate Lafitte's buried treasure has been one of the industries of Abbeville, La., for the past twenty-five years, perhaps longer. Parties come at intervals, each claiming to have a sure "tip" as to the location, and each returns empty-handed. But others do not learn from their experience. The lure of gold does not listen to reason.

These periodical searches are based upon the existence of supposed charts—one of which was drawn by the pirate himself, and two others by one Felton, said to be his secretary. The whereabouts of the original is not known, nor is it known that there ever was one, this being only the supposition of "Joe the Cattleman." As to the other two, they are in existence and are signed by "Felton, Secretary."

For several weeks a party of treasure hunters have been digging and surveying on "Outer Island" in White Lake, down in Vermillion Parish, for the supposed buried treasure. The party is composed of J. F. Stratton, capitalist, and M. Pearson, civil engineer, both of Houston, Texas, and others whose names are kept in the background. The Stratton-Pearson party have what they claim is a map of White Lake, but it is worn and the lines are indistinct. They dredged on a line which was supposed to mark the channel of a creek, and there, across the channel, they found the rotted timbers of an old vessel. They reason that Lafitte buried the gold on "Outer Island," sunk the boat across a channel to blockade searchers, and in a little boat steered his course into Southwest Pass, and thence in to the Gulf of Mexico.

This rotted hulk furnished a "clew," and the gold could not be far off, Engineer Pearson reasoned. It must be on the near-by Outer Island. He took longitudes and latitudes from a giant oak. From the rings on its trunk he estimated it was about five hundred years old. Perhaps, he reasoned, Lafitte would select this as the best landmark. He sank steel rods into the earth to a depth of six and eight feet, but struck nothing harder than dirt. After burrowing on every side, he changed his prospecting to another large tree, two hundred feet farther inland.

Pearson cut away the grass, and his hopes were somewhat shattered when he discovered at the base of this tree the outlines of a trench. The lines were traced to a length of twelve feet, and four feet in width. He excavated to a depth of four feet, when his shovel struck a few pieces of brick. The excavation continued until the entire trench was scooped out. Nothing was found but dirt. However, Pearson still believed he was on the right trail.

He returned to his camp, and next day went to the mainland and hunted up "Joe," a cattle driver, who had lived in that section half a century. Joe stated that about seventeen years ago, while driving his cattle in the marsh for grass, he saw where some men were digging. In

about a week he returned and the hole was six feet deep, and the men were gone. He did not know who they were, nor whence they came, but thought that they were Frenchmen "from a long distance," and that they had Lafitte's map—one made by Lafitte himself. Whether or not they got the money, he could not say.

Acting on the theory that the inner and smaller tree was not the point designated in the map, and that, therefore, the hole in the ground at its base signified nothing—perhaps only a cattle wallow—Engineer Pearson adopted another plan.

He again returned to Houston, and sought out one "Professor" Drummitt, an "expert" in locating minerals, oil, water, et cetera.

The engineer and the professor, with renewed faith and testing apparatus, descended upon the island and began operations. The professor stated that his compass and battery could find gold at a depth of two thousand feet, even though under water. The professor's compass is in the shape of an oblique-angled triangle, with a battery at the apex. This battery is of copper, iron, gold, or silver, according to the mineral to be searched for, and is attached to the instrument by screws. Each of the steel prongs is held in the right and left hand, at an angle of about fifty degrees. The battery is attracted by the mineral and bends toward the ground.

The professor selected a hillock a few feet from the base of the larger tree, affixed the battery for gold onto the compass, and held it aloft. Finally it began to move, and then to bend down.

"There is the gold!" exclaimed the professor. "It is six feet down. The vault is of cement. It contains gold, but I can't say how much."

Acting upon this scientific tip, the engineer fell to digging with his spade. The soil is soft, and it did not take long to go six feet, being encouraged by the prospect of scooping up $7,000,000. But nothing was found, except mud.

The professor explained that the failure of his instrument was owing to the presence of salt water—that gold was there. But he could not explain the absence of cement. He wanted to make further tests, but the engineer had enough, and with disgust they returned to Abbeville, and the professor left for other fields. He was paid twenty-five dollars a day and his expenses and guaranteed the payment of one million of the stuff—if found.

While in Abbeville, the noise of the operations having spread, Pearson learned that there was another map giving the location of the buried treasure. It could not be the true map, according to the statement of Joe, the cattleman. But, as his own map was at fault, and the professor's "compass" had led him astray, Pearson thought he would take a chance at this map.

Accordingly he rounded up the man with the third map, J. A. Davidson, a butcher in Abbeville. After several heart-to-heart talks, Davidson refused to unite in a search for the treasure. Evidently he wants it all or none, and has great faith in his map.

The story of these maps is something on the line of the usual maps locating pirates' treasure—and which do not locate. After Lafitte and his pirates hold were chased out of the Gulf by the government revenue cutters, they sailed up Southwest Pass, we are told, and finally into White Lake. They planted their ill-gotten gold on the first island in the lake, known as Outer Island. It is not known how many were on the good ship, but tradition mentions Lafitte, his secretary Felton, and two negroes. After burying the treasure, they cut the throats of the two negroes, threw their bodies into the lake, scuttled one of their vessels, and sailed away.

Lafitte went to France and reformed, and like his ancestral sea robber, Francis Drake, was given a title. Under the title of "Count Languedoc," he married and "lived happily ever after." The historical statement that he died in Peru, a pauper, is thus controverted.

Many years after, when very old, Felton rigged out a ship at New York and sailed for the lake down in the Acadian country in Southwest Louisiana. The lake then had no name and he designated it on his map merely as a large body of water. While en route, Felton was taken sick, yielded up the ghost, and was buried at sea. But before dying he gave his map to his faithful body servant, Jim Ambroise, an octoroon. It seems that the conscience of the old pirate smote him, for he then confided in this servant his part in the killing of the two negroes. When the ship landed at New Orleans the crew scattered. Jim finally found his way into Acadia, and found work on a plantation in what is now Iberia Parish. When Jim came to die he gave the map to his employer, Captain Magee, who lived at Opelousas. He also handed down the story of the killing of the two negroes by Lafitte and Felton. It is this map Pearson is operating with.

And now comes the story of the second map—or duplicate, or key—neither being complete without the other. In earlier days, Davidson, the butcher, was an overseer on the plantation where Jim was working. When Jim died he also gave Davidson a map, according to Davidson's statement. Jim did not tell him of the existence of another map, nor did he tell Magee that he had given one to Davidson. Both of them went in hot pursuit of the supposed hidden treasure, each believed that the other was shadowing his tracks. On one expedition, about ten years ago, Davidson lost his map. He thinks one of the party appropriated it, and he has ever since been searching for it, so that he could renew his search for the millions. The one he now has was made from memory.

Theater Poster in Gas Main.

In the office of the Peoples Gas Light and Coke Company, of Chicago, a large theatrical poster was recently displayed. It was printed in 1884, and announced, in bold red and blue letters that "Abraham Lincoln," the stirring war-time drama, was appearing at the Chicago Opera House, and that on the following week Chicago theatergoers were to hear Minnie Hauck and her opera company.

Officials of the gas company explain that the poster is of interest to them because it was found in a six-inch main near the site of the old Chicago Opera House.

Chicago gas has passed through the paper tube for thirty years, but the colors were not faded, and the white paper was unstained, except for several spots of iron rust from the gas main.

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